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BIRDS WITHOUT A NEST.

A Story of Indian Life and Priestly Oppression in Peru

BIRDS WITHOUT A NEST

BIRDS WITHOUT A NEST

PASSING THE TEMPLE.

Frontispiece.

BIRDS WITHOUT A NEST:

A Story of Indian Life and Priestly Oppression in Peru

BY
MRS. CLORINDA MATTO DE TURNER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY J. G. H.

London:
CHARLES J. THYNNE,
WYCLIFFE HOUSE, 6 GREAT QUEEN STREET,
KINGSWAY, W.C.
1904.

To the Memory of

Albert Merriam Hudson,

who was ever the loyal friend and staunch

defender of the oppressed and downtrodden,

this work is lovingly dedicated

by the translator,

J. G. H.

PREFACE

I HAVE been requested to write a short introduction to this English translation of "Aves sin Nido" ("Birds without a nest") for several reasons. I have travelled somewhat in these countries and am therefore in a measure acquainted with existing conditions; I am in deepest sympathy with every effort to ameliorate the condition of the Indian, and I am well acquainted with the writer.

A historian, contemporary with the early colonization of Peru, writes: "The ills that the Indians suffered were so many and so great that nothing could be conceived more deplorable. They killed them, robbed them, and enslaved them without motive or necessity. For forty years they treated those innocent creatures with the cruelty of hungry wolves, tigers and lions; they oppressed and destroyed them by all the means that human malice could devise. The inhuman policy of the conquerors caused, as is commonly believed, twelve millions of Indians to die. Greed of gold has been the cause of this terrible butchery. The conquerors have known no other god, and to fill themselves with treasure they have treated as vile refuse the people who received them as the messengers of heaven."

This was written nearly five hundred years

ago, since which time the Roman Catholic religion has had full sway, and the condition of the Indian to-day is infinitely worse than it was under the mild rule of the heathen Incas as the facts in this book clearly show.

Doña Clorinda Matto de Turner is a lady distinguished as a writer among the *literati* of Perú, a member of the Archæological Society of Cuzco, and the author of several popular books. "Birds Without a Nest" is under the ban of the Roman Catholic Church. For this and like offences the writer has been excommunicated and practically exiled from her own country. When some of her Roman Catholic friends called on the Archbishop of Lima to intercede for her, he said: "Everything could be forgiven but the book, that could never be forgiven." For some nine years she has been in Buenos Aires pursuing her literary and educational work, the most important of which is the translation of the New Testament into Quechua, which she is executing for the American Bible Society, and for which she believes that through many vicissitudes her life has been preserved to the present time.

The scenes portrayed here are not fiction, nor are they overdrawn, but are the counterpart of what is going on to-day in Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador.

When Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote her "Uncle Tom's Cabin," she had the faith and fervour of a great Christian nation behind her. Mrs. Turner was alone in her first effort.

Born and educated a Roman Catholic, and without that appreciation of the Gospel which she has to-day, she dared to send out her little book which roused all the religious opposition and persecution which could be brought to bear upon her.

There are many indications that God's time has come for the redemption of this most interesting people, the Quechua race. From different points in recent years, deputations of Indians have come to Lima to appeal to the Government of Peru against the oppression and injustice of the local authorities, with the immediate result that the relatives of these messengers were fined or thrown into prison. Lately, however, grievances are being redressed, and steps taken by the actual Government to prevent their recurrence. Within a few weeks two papers have been started in the aboriginal language, and a scheme is now before the Government for the free and compulsory education of the Indian in his own tongue. These, with the translation of the New Testament now in progress, the recent planting of a pioneer Quechua Mission in Bolivia, and other providential indications, surely point to the dawn of a brighter day for the long down-trodden Quechua Indian.

ANDREW M. MILNE.

Agent of the American Bible Society for the Republics of the River Plate, Chile, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador.

BUENOS AIRES, February 18th, 1904.

CRITICISMS

This book has been well received by the most excellent literary critics of the Andine Republics. The ground of the story is laid in Perú, but the testimonies here cited show that the same things could be written of both Bolivia and Ecuador.

In PERÚ, Señor Emilio Gutierrez de Quintanilla, Peruvian correspondent of the Royal Spanish Academy, in his criticism published some time ago in Lima, greatly applauds "Birds Without a Nest;"

In ECUADOR, Señor Manuel Nicolas Arízaga says that all these things are true of Ecuador;

And in BOLIVIA, Señor Julio Cesar Baldez says "Birds Without a Nest" is a very mild picture of the state of things in Bolivia.

BIRDS WITHOUT A NEST

PART I

CHAPTER I

It was a cloudless summer morning, and all Nature, smiling in his felicity, sent up a hymn of adoration to the author of its beauty.

The heart, tranquil as the nest of the dove, gave itself up to the contemplation of the magnificent picture.

The single plaza (public square) of the little Peruvian town of Killac measures three hundred and fourteen square metres. Buildings of different kinds are grouped around it, the red tiled roofs of the houses rising above the straw thatched cabins of the Indians.

On the left rises that common home of the Christian—the temple, surrounded by a stone wall, and in the belfry, where the old bell laments for those that die and laughs for the newly born, the cullcus build their nests.

The cemetery of the church is the place where, by common consent, the people gather

together on Sundays after mass, comparing notes about their work, murmuring at their hardships and gossiping a little about each other.

Less than half a mile to the South one finds a beautiful country house, noted for its elegant construction, contrasting strongly with the simplicity of its location. Its name is "Manzanares." This was the property of the former priest of Killac, Don Pedro Miranda y Claro, afterwards Bishop of the Diocese, of whom careless-tongued people sometimes spoke in not very saintly terms when commenting upon occurrences which took place during the twenty years that Don Pedro was the shepherd of the flock. In that period "Manzanares" was built and became afterwards the summer residence of his Illustrious Highness.

The beautiful plain, surrounded by orchards and cultivated fields, watered by channels of murmuring crystal water, the river flowing near, all combine to render Killac a place of poetic beauty.

The night before, rain had fallen, accompanied by hail and thunder, clearing and refreshing the air, and the rising sun, peeping above the horizon, sent its golden rays over the trembling plants, turning into jewels the crystal drops not yet fallen from the green leaves.

The swallows and thrushes flew from tree top to house, filling the air with music, their bright plumage glittering in the sun.

Early summer mornings, bright and beautiful, inviting one to live; inspire the painter and the poèt in the pleasant land of Perú.

CHAPTER II

On that morning which we have described, when the sun, recently risen from his dark couch, called bird and flower to spring up to salute him with their homage of love and gratitude, a labourer crossed the plaza, guiding his yoke of oxen laden with the implements of husbandry, a yoke, a grad and leathern straps for work, and the provisions of the day; the traditional "chuspa," or bag of woven wool of various colours, fastened to the belt containing the "coca" leaves and cakes of "llipta" for his lunch.

On passing the door of the temple he reverently lifted his cap and murmured something like an invocation, then went on his way, now and then looking back sorrowfully at the cabin from whence he came.

Was it fear or doubt, love or hope that troubled his soul at that moment? It was plainly to be seen that something impressed his mind strongly.

Scarcely was the labourer lost to sight in the distance when the figure of a woman sprang lightly over the wall on the South side of the

plaza. She was a young Indian woman of not more than thirty years of age, with fine features and rosy face. Shaking off her dress the mud which had fallen upon her from the wall, she directed her steps to a modest looking white cottage with tiled roof not far away.

At the open door she was met by a young lady neatly dressed in grey with lace trimmings and mother-of-pearl buttons.

Very fair and generous was this lady,—the Señora Lucia, wife of Don Fernando Marin, a gentleman who had some business connection with the mines near the place and had settled temporarily in Killac.

The newcomer addressed Lucia quickly without ceremony, saying: "In the name of the Virgin, Señora, protect this day an unfortunate family. He who has gone to the fields to-day passing by you here, laden with the implements of labour, is Juan Yupanqui, my husband and father of our two little girls. Alas, Señora! He has gone out with his heart half dead, because he knows that to-day will be the day of distribution, and as the overseer directs the barley sowing he cannot hide himself because, besides the imprisonment, he would have to pay the fine, and we have no money. I was crying beside Rosalia, who sleeps by the fireplace, when suddenly my heart told me that you are good, and without Juan's knowledge I came to implore your assistance for the sake of the Virgin, Señora.

A flood of tears put an end to that suppli-

cation which was full of mystery to Lucia, for, having resided but a few months in the place, she was ignorant of its customs and could not appreciate at their full value the references made by the poor woman, although they roused her sympathy.

It is necessary to see face to face these disinherited creatures, to hear from their own lips in their expressive language the narrative of their actual circumstances, in order to understand the quick sympathy which springs up unconsciously in noble hearts, and how they came to take part in their suffering finally, although at first prompted only by a desire for knowledge.

The words of the Indian woman excited the interest of the sympathetic Lucia, and she asked kindly: "And who are you?"

"I am Marcela, my lady, the wife of Juan Yupanqui, poor and unprotected," replied the woman, drying her eyes upon the sleeve of her dress.

Lucia, putting her hand kindly upon her shoulder, invited her to take a seat upon a stone bench in the garden and rest herself.

"Sit down, Marcela; dry those tears that throw a cloud over the sky of your eyes, and let us talk calmly," she said.

Marcela calmed her grief, and, perhaps with the hope of salvation, responded with minuteness to the questions of Lucia: "As you are not of this place, Señora, you do not know the martyrdom we suffer from the collectors, the overseers, and the priests.

Alas, alas! Why does not a plague carry us all away that we might at least sleep peacefully in the earth?"

"Why do you despair so, poor Marcela? There will be some remedy, you are a mother, and the heart of a mother lives as many lives in one as she has children."

"Yes, Señora" replied Marcela? "You have the face of the Virgin to whom we offer our praise and prayers, and that is why I came to ask your help. I wish to save my husband. He said to me when he went away: 'One of these days I shall have to throw myself into the river, because I cannot endure this life; and I want to kill you too before giving my life to the water,' and you know, Señora, that this is not right."

"It is a wrong thought, a crazy idea,—poor Juan!"—said Lucia sadly;—then casting a searching glance upon the woman continued: "And what is the most urgent need to-day? Speak freely, Marcela."

"Last year"—the woman, said, "they left in our cabin ten dollars for two quintals of wool. This money we spent buying, among other things, these clothes I am wearing, for Juan said we would get together during the year as much more money; but this has not been possible because of the 'faena' (obligatory and unpaid labour which the authorities impose upon the Indians) and because my mother-in-law died at Christmas time and the priest put an 'embargo' upon our

potato crop to pay the expenses of the burial and prayers. Now I have to enter the parochial house of 'mita' (unpaid and enforced work which the Indian women do in the houses of the priests and authorities), leaving my husband and daughters; and while I am gone who knows if Juan will not go crazy and die. Who knows, also, the fate that awaits me, for the women that go to the 'mita' come out—looking down at the ground."

"Enough! Do not tell me any more"—exclaimed Lucia, horror stricken at the depths to which the narration of Marcela was leading her. The last words struck terror to the heart of the pure-minded woman.

"I will speak to the Governor and the priest this very day, and perhaps to-morrow you will remain free and contented. Go now and take care of your little girls, and when Juan returns soothe him,—tell him that you have spoken to me, and tell him to come and see me."

The poor woman gave a sigh of satisfaction, perhaps for the first time in her life.

So solemn is the situation of one who, in the supreme hour of misfortune, finds a generous heart to lend her aid, that the heart does not know whether to bathe with tears or cover with kisses in silence the loving hand stretched out to help, or to break out in words of blessing. That is what passed during those moments through the heart of Marcela.

Those who do good to the down-trodden,

never can measure the worth of one single word of kindness, one loving smile that for the fallen, the unhappy, is like the rays of sunshine that return life to the members benumbed by the ice of misfortune.

CHAPTER III

In the Peruvian provinces, where they breed the alpaca, and where traffic in wool is the chief source of riches, there exists almost without exception the custom known as "distribution in advance," which the business magnates, the well-to-do people of the place, practice.

For the payment in advance which the wool buyers make and force the Indians to accept, they fix the price of a 'quintal' of wool so low that the gain which the capital invested is made to produce exceeds five hundred per cent.

The Indians who are owners of alpacas emigrate from their huts during the time of distribution, in order not to receive the money advanced, which for them is almost as cursed as the thirty pieces of silver received by Judas.

But, does the abandonment of home, the wanderings among the mountains, ensure their safety? No.

The collector, who is at the same time the distributor of assessor, breaks into their

cabins, whose weak lock in the door made of hide offers but little resistance, leaves upon a bench or bunk the money, and marches off to return next year with the list which is the only judge and witness for the unfortunate debtor.

When the year is finished the collector returns with a retinue of ten or twelve men, sometimes disguised as soldiers and with a special balance with counter weights of stone, takes out fifty pounds of wool for twenty five. If the Indian secretes his wool, his only source of income, or if he protests and curses, he is subjected to such tortures as the pen refuses to narrate.

The pastoral of one of the most celebrated Bishops the Peruvian church ever had makes meritorious these excesses, but does not dare to speak of the cold water baths which in some places they employ to force the Indians to declare where they have hidden their goods. The Indian fears that even more than the lash. These inhuman beings who take the form for the spirit of the law allege that flogging is prohibited in Perú; but not the barbarities which they practice on their brothers in misfortune.

The bitter sorrow and despair of Marcela, when thinking of the near coming of the collector, was only the just and anguished explosion of one who sees before her only a world of poverty and infamous pain.

WHITE HOUSE.

Face page 21.

CHAPTER IV

Lucia was no ordinary woman. She had received a good education, and by means of comparisons, her quick intelligence often reached the light of truth in advance of others. She was tall and graceful, not very fair, but what is called in the country "pearl coloured"; her beautiful eyes were shaded by long lashes and velvety eyebrows; she had also that distinctively feminine charm, a wealth of long wavy hair. She had not quite completed twenty summers, but marriage had set upon her that sign and seal of lady that so well becomes a young woman who understands how to unite amiability of character with seriousness of manner. Her husband, Don Fernando Marin, was Director of a Company for working some silver mines in an adjoining province, and had his office in Killac. Here they had lived for a year in what was known as "the White House."

After her interview with Marcela, Lucia set herself to work to form a plan for saving the poor woman from her painful situation. The word of her husband would have been

sufficient to realize all immediate plans, but Don Fernando had gone on a visit to the mines and might not return for some weeks.

The first thought that came to her was to speak personally with the priest and the Governor. For that purpose she sent notes to each of them asking for the favour of a visit.

Arranging her reception room and putting things in order generally for the expected visit, Lucia seated herself on the sofa and began to form her plan of attack.

Presently a heavy knock aroused her from her meditations, and the softly-opened door gave entrance to the priest and the Governor.

CHAPTER V

Of low stature, flat head, large wide-open nose, thick lips, small grey eyes; a short neck surrounded by a band of black and white beads, unshaven chin, dressed in a habit of black cloth, badly cut and badly attended to, a hat of Guayaquil straw in his right hand,—such was the aspect of the first personage who entered, whom Lucia saluted with much respect, saying, "May God be with you, Father Pascual."

The priest, Pascual Vargas, successor of Don Pedro Miranda y Claro, in the holy office at Killac, inspired from the first very serious doubts as to the idea of his having learned in the Seminary either Theology or Latin. His age bordered on fifty years. His manner and appearance were such that it was not difficult to understand Marcela's reluctance to enter the parochial house in the character of "mita."

To the mind of Lucia came involuntarily the question as to how a person of such appearance and manner had been able to reach the position of the grandest of

ministries,—for in her religious convictions the priesthood was the embodiment of the highest, sublimest, protectorship for man on earth, receiving him in the cradle with the sign of baptism, despositing his remains in the earth with the holy water of purification, and during his pilgrimage in this vale of sorrows sweetening and softening his bitter pain with the wise word of counsel and the soft voice of hope.

Lucia forgot that its being a mission dependent upon the human will explained its propensity to err; she had also very little idea of what the characters and lives of the priests in those retired places were.

The personage enveloped in a large Spanish cloak, who followed the priest into the room, was Don Sebastian Pancorbo, Governor of the town of Killac.

Don Sebastian, after passing three years in a primary school in a neighbouring city, returned to his native town, married Doña Petronilla Hinojosa, daughter of one of the notables of the place, and was immediately made Governor; that is to say, he arrived at the highest post known and aspired to in a small town.

These two grand personages seated themselves comfortably in the arm chairs indicated by Lucia.

The Señora Marin set herself to the task of interesting her callers in favour of Marcela. Addressing herself particularly to the priest,

she said: "In the name of the Christian religion, which is pure love, tenderness and hope; in the name of your Master, who commanded us to give to the poor,—I ask you, Father, to pardon this debt which weighs upon the family of Juan Yupanqui. Ah! You will have in exchange double treasure in heaven!"

"Señora," replied the priest, settling himself comfortably and resting both hands upon the arms of the chair, "all these are beautiful theories, but, God help us who lives without income? To-day, with the increase of ecclesiastical taxes, and the rush of civilized people who will come with the railroads, our emoluments will cease; and . . ., and . . . in short Doña Lucia, away with the priests! We will die with hunger!"

"Has the Indian Yupanqui come for this?" interposed the Governor in support of the priest, and with a triumphant tone concluded, emphasizing the words for Lucia's benefit: "You know, Señora, that custom is law, and that no one can take us out of our customs."

"Gentlemen, charity is also a law of the heart," interrupted Lucia.

"And Juan, eh? We will see if he will return to touch these springs again, this mischief-making Indian," continued Pancorbo in a threatening tone, that could not help being noticed by Lucia, whose heart trembled with fear.

The few words exchanged between them

made perfectly clear to Lucia the moral degradation of these men, from whom nothing could be hoped and everything was to be feared. Her plan was frustrated completely, but her heart remained fully interested in the family of Marcela, and she was resolved to protect them against all abuse. Her dove's heart felt its own self respect wounded, and her brow grew pale.

She spoke up energetically: "A sad reality, sirs! I shall have to persuade myself, that vile self interest has withered also the most beautiful flowers of the sentiment of humanity in these regions where I thought to find patriarchal families with the love of brother for brother. We have asked nothing of anyone, and the family of Juan Yupanqui will never solicit either your favour or your protection." On uttering these words with all the warmth of a generous heart, the beautiful eyes of Lucia were directed, with the look of one giving a command, towards the open door.

The two potentates of Killac were confounded by this unexpected outburst of Lucia, and seeing no other way of saving themselves, took up their hats to retire.

"Señora Lucia, do not be offended by this, and believe me to be always your faithful chaplain"—said Don Pascual; while Don Sebastian hastened to remark dryly: "Good afternoon, Señora Lucia."

Lucia cut short the usual ceremony of leave taking, simply inclining her head in response.

Seeing those men go away leaving such a deep impression on her pure soul, she said to herself, tremblingly but vehemently: "Oh no, no! That man insults the Catholic priesthood! I have seen in the city superior beings with grey heads, go in silence and quietness to look after the poor and the orphan, to succour and console them. I have contemplated the Catholic priest at the bedside of the dying; have seen him pure before the altar of sacrifice; weeping and humble in the home of the widow and orphan; have seen him take the last loaf of bread from his table and give it to the poor, depriving himself of sustenance and thanking God for the mercy that he could give! But that priest Pascual,—is he one of those? No. A priest of wickedness instead. And that other—his soul cast in the narrow mould of avarice; the Governor does not merit the dignity which has been given him as though he were an honest man."

As Lucia was finishing her dinner that day, a boy came with a letter. Recognizing the handwriting of her husband she opened it immediately, and, as she read, an observer would have known, by the brightening up of her expressive countenance, that it brought her good news. Señor Marin wrote that he would be with her the next morning, as the constantly falling masses of ice and snow from the mountains had interrupted the work among the mines for a time.

CHAPTER VI

When Marcela returned to her cabin, carrying a world of hope in her heart, she found her children awake and the youngest crying disconsolately at finding her mother absent.

A little patting from her mother, and a handful of boiled corn to eat, was sufficient to calm the grief of the innocent creature who, although born in poverty and rags in the hut of an Indian, shed the same crystal tears as those that fall from the eyes of the children of kings.

Marcela took with enthusiasm her portable loom and continued her work of weaving a beautiful "poncho," made bright by the brilliant colours the Indians love.

Never had she begun her daily task more contentedly, and never built more castles in the air than now as she meditated how best to impart to Juan the good news that awaited him.

The hours, for this same reason, seemed very long; but at last came the evening twilight, enveloping in its shadows valley and town, calling away from the fields the cooing doves, which circled around in different directions in quest of their protecting tree.

With these came Juan, and no sooner had Marcela heard his step in the distance, than she went out to meet him; helped him to tie the oxen in the yard and threw food in the manger. When at last Juan was seated in the house she began to talk to him with a certain timidity, as if doubting how he would receive the news she had to give him.

"Do you know the lady Lucia, Juan?" she asked.

"I go to mass, Marcela, and there everyone is known," replied Juan with indifference.

"Well, I have spoken with her to-day."

"You? And for what?"—inquired the Indian in surprise, looking intently at his wife.

"I am so pained by all we have to endure; you have made me see plainly that this life is making you desperate."

"Did the collector come?"—interrupted Juan.

Marcela replied calmly and confidently: "Not yet, thank Heaven, but hear me, Juan. I believe that good Señora can relieve us; she told me that she would help us and that you must go and see her."

"Poor flower of the desert, Marcela," said the Indian, shaking his head and taking up the little Rosalia clinging to his knees, "Your heart is like the fruit of the 'Penca,' break off one and another comes to take its place. I am older than you and I have wept without hope."

"Not so I, although you tell me I imitate the 'tuna'; but better thus than to be as you are,

like the 'Mastuerzo' which, once touched, withers away. The hand of some evil spirit has touched you; but I have seen the face of the Virgin, the same, the very same, as the face of the Señora Lucia"—said Marcela, laughing like a little girl.

"It may be"—said the sad hearted Juan, "but I come tired out from work and without bringing one loaf of bread for you, who are *my virgin;* and for these little chickens,"—pointing to the two little girls.

"You complain too much, Juan; perhaps you do not remember that when the priest goes to his house with his pockets full of silver from the responses of All saints, there is no one waiting for him as I wait for thee, with open arms, and with kisses of love such as the little angels keep for thee. Ungrateful! Thinking of bread; here we have cold boiled corn and cooked corn meal, which with its appetising odour is inviting us,—eat, ungrateful one!"

Marcela was changed. The hopes that Lucia had raised in her heart made her another person; and her logic, mixed with the voice of the heart, was irresistible and convincing.

Juan drew his daughter to his side, Marcela took from the fire two earthen pots, and all partook of the frugal repast.

The supper was finished and the house already enveloped in the dark shades of night. Without other light than that of the soft flame made by some little half burnt sticks in the fire, they all went to rest in one common bed made

on a wide brick platform ;—a hard bed, but one which, for the love and resignation of the family, had the softness of feathers which love has let fall from his white wings. A bed of roses, where love, like the primitive sentiment of tenderness, lives still in the hearts of the simple Indians.

With the morning light the family left their humble bed, offered the prayer of praise and thanksgiving, made the sign of the cross on their brows and began the labours of the new day.

Marcela was the first to say: "Juan, I am going over soon to see the Señora Lucia. You are unbelieving and taciturn, but my heart is speaking to me without ceasing since yesterday."

"Go, then, Marcela,—go ; because to-day the collector will not fail to come. I have dreamed it, and we have no other resource," answered the Indian, whose spirits seemed to have revived somewhat under the influence of his wife's words.

CHAPTER VII

That morning the "White House" seemed full of happiness. The return of Don Fernando brought infinite happiness to his home, where he was both loved and respected.

Lucia, strongly determined to find some positive means of carrying out the purpose in regard to the family of Yupanqui; resolved to take advantage of the poetry and sweetness which surround the meeting of husband and wife after a separation.

Lucia, who some hours before seemed languid and sorrowful like flowers without sun or dew, had become strong and cheerful in the presence of the man who had confided to her keeping the sanctity of his home and his name, the holy ark of his honour, in calling her wife.

The chain of flowers which unite two wills in one, bound together the husband and wife, or God whose name is love the God of Love himself welding the links.

"Fernando, soul of my soul," said Lucia putting her hands upon her husband's

shoulders,—"I am going to collect a debt, executively."

"You are quite a lawyer to-day, my dear. Speak, but remember that if the debt is not legally correct you will pay me a fine,"—replied her husband smiling.

"A fine! That is what you exact always. I will pay the fine. What I wish you to remember is a solemn promise which you have made me for the twenty-eighth of July."

"The twenty-eighth of July?"

"You pretend to forget; do you not remember you promised me a velvet dress to display in the city?"

"Perfectly, my dear, and I will fulfil my promise. I will order it by the first post. How fine you will be with that dress!"

"No, no, Fernando; what I wish is that you permit me to dispose of the value of the dress, on condition that I present myself on the twenty-eighth of July as elegantly dressed as you have seen me since our marriage."

"And what—?"

"Nothing; I will not admit any questions; say yes or no!"—and the lips of Lucia met those of Don Fernando, who, satisfied and happy, replied: "Flatterer! What can I deny you when you speak to me thus? How much do you need for this caprice?"

"Very little; two hundred dollars."

"Very well"—said her husband tearing a leaf out of his note book and writing upon it; "here you have an order for the cashier of the

Company to pay you two hundred dollars. And now let me go to work to make up for the time lost by the journey."

"Thank you, thank you, Fernando," she said, taking the paper, happy as a child.

Leaving the room Don Fernando went to his office, his mind full of pleasant thoughts awakened by that girlish petition of Lucia, comparing it with the useless expenditures with which other women victimise their husbands in their desire for show and luxury, and this comparison convinced him the more of the value of good habits inculcated in a child in the paternal home. The Peruvian woman is docile and virtuous as a general rule.

Shortly after the departure of Don Fernando, Marcela entered the yard of the White House accompanied by a young girl. This child was a wonder of beauty and grace, which from the first interested Lucia, awakening a desire to see the father, because her rare beauty was a striking example of the loveliness often produced by the mixture of Spanish and Peruvian blood so often seen in this country.

Looking closely at the girl, Lucia said to herself: "This will be without doubt, the good angel of Marcela, because God has put a peculiar brilliance in those countenances from which looks out a privileged soul."

"WHAT DO YOU THINK, DON SEBASTIAN?"

Face page 35.

CHAPTER VIII

When the priest and the Governor left the house of the Señora Marin after the interview in which she tried to influence them in favour of the family of Yupanqui, a lively conversation ensued as they went their way down the street.

"Here's a pretty state of things! What do you think, Don Sebastian, of the pretensions of that Señora?" said the priest, taking out a cigar and preparing it for lighting.

"That was the only thing wanting, Father, that some foreigners should come here to make rules for us, modifying the customs which have existed from the time of our great grandfathers," answered the Governor, stopping a moment to wrap himself up in his great cape, while the priest added, "Give a little more rope to these Indians and soon we shall not have anyone even to draw up water to wash out the cups."

"We must get rid of these foreigners, really, Father, for these Indians, if they have anyone to uphold them, will soon become insufferable."

"That is just what I was going to suggest to you, Governor. Here, among ourselves in

family, we get along beautifully; but these foreigners come here to observe us, to watch us, even to our manner of eating,—if we have a clean table cloth, if we eat with spoons or with sticks," grumbled the priest, sending out a cloud of smoke from his mouth.

"Do not trouble yourself, Father; let us be united, and the occasion for throwing them out of the town will soon present itself."

"But with great caution, Don Sebastian; we must be very careful in these matters, these people are well connected and we might make a false move."

"We know what they are working for. Do you remember what Don Fernando said one day?"

"Certainly, Governor; he wishes that the 'distributions' should be suppressed; says that they are an injustice! Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the priest maliciously, throwing away the stump of his cigar.

"He also wishes that the poor should have free burial, and that even debts should be pardoned. Fine times for free burials! Really, Father," added Don Sebastian, whose eternal "really" caused one to suspect him to be either a hypocrite or an idiot.

When they arrived at the Governor's house, he invited the priest to enter. Here they found a number of the most notable people gathered together commenting upon the fact of the priest and Governor being called to the house of the Señora Marin, the news having already been spread all over the town.

When the two important personages entered, everyone rose to his feet to salute them, and the Governor immediately ordered a bottle of the "pure article."

"It is necessary, Father, to drown the fly with a little drink, really," said Don Sebastian, meaningly, taking off his great cape.

"Certainly, my good Sebastian, and you always have the best," answered the priest, rubbing his hands.

"Yes, Father, it is of the best, really, because Doña Rufa sends it to me before baptizing it."

At that moment a "pongo" (one who is obliged to give gratuitous service at the houses of the priests and of the authorities) entered with a bottle of alcohol and a glass.

The furniture of the drawing room, typical of the place, consisted of two large sofas covered with black oil cloth nailed on with round brass tacks, some wooden chairs, the backs of which were painted with flowers and fruit. In the centre of the room was a round table covered with a green cloth on which were materials for writing. The walls were adorned with illustrated papers showing a rare collection of personages, animals and landscapes of European countries. The floor was covered with matting.

The gathering consisted of eight persons. The priest and the governor; Estéfano Benites, —a young man with quick wit who, having improved the hours of school to better advantage than his schoolfellows, is already an important personage in this small town; and

five more individuals belonging to distinguished families of the place; all men of position, from having contracted matrimony at the age of nineteen, the usual age in these towns.

Estéfano Benites, who had passed his twenty two years beneath the sun, was very tall and singularly thin; his wax-like pallidness of countenance, a very unusual thing in the place where he was born, reminding one of the fatal consumption that attacks so many in the tropical countries.

Estéfano took the bottle left on the table by the "pongo" and served each one his respective glass of alcohol.

After the usual ration of two glasses, the appetite was really opened and the bottles kept coming in at the command of Don Sebastian.

The priest and the Governor were seated together on one of the sofas conversing privately, while the others were talking freely, gathered together in groups in different parts of the room.

But as confidence resides in the depth of the bottle, Don Sebastian soon found his tongue loosened, being well moistened by the "pure article," and began to talk openly.

"We must not consent, by any means, Señor priest, really. And what do these gentlemen say?" raising his voice and striking the back of the seat with the glass he had just emptied.

"Chist!" said the priest taking out a large black and white handkerchief and pretending to sneeze.

"Of what are you speaking, gentlemen?" asked Estéfano; and everyone turned towards the priest.

The priest Pascual put on a certain air of gravity and said: "The fact that the Señora Lucia called us there to speak to us about some poor scheming Indians who do not wish to pay what they owe; she has used words that, as Don Sebastian says, if understood by the Indians would destroy for us our customs of 'repartos, mitas, pongos,' and everything else."

"We will never consent. What an idea!" shouted Estéfano supported by the others, while Don Sebastian added maliciously. "And has proposed free burial for the poor, and so, really, you see how our priest would suffer."

"Away with the pretensions of these foreigners!" shouted Estéfano, in the name of all.

"Once for all, let us put an end to all these evil teachings; it is necessary to expel from the place every foreigner who does not come with desires to support our customs, because we, really, are the children of the country," said Don Sebastian, raising his voice and going to the table to serve a glass to the priest.

"Yes, we are in our own country."

"Born in the land!"

"Genuine Peruvians!"

Such were the exclamations from all sides; but no one stopped to inquire if the Marins were not Peruvians because born in the capital.

"Carefully, carefully; say nothing, but work!" added the priest.

And that afternoon, in the house of the civil authority and in the presence of the ecclesiastical ruler, was stirred up and set to work the odium which was to envelop the honest Don Fernando in a wave of blood, because of the kindly and charitable act of his wife.

CHAPTER IX

When Marcela and the little girl came near, Lucia exclaimed in surprise: "Is this your daughter?"

"Yes, Señora, she is fourteen years old; her name is Margarita and she is to be your god child," replied the Indian woman.

The reply was given with such an air of satisfaction, that anyone seeing and hearing her would feel intuitively that this woman was bathing herself in the perfume of holy pride which overwhelms a mother when she understands that her daughters are admired. Holy pride of motherhood which honours the brow of woman, let it be in the city glowing with electric lights, or in the humble town illuminated only by the melancholy traveller of night.

"Well, Marcela, you have done well in bringing that pretty girl to see me. I am very fond of children; they are so innocent and pure."

"Señora, it is because your soul is blossoming for heaven," said Marcela more and more charmed at having gained the protection of such an angel of kindness.

"Have you spoken to Juan? How much

money do you need to pay all and live in peace?" asked Lucia.

"Alas Señora! I hardly know how to count it. Without doubt it will be a great deal of money, because the collector, even if he allows us to return the 'reparto' in money, will ask for each 'quintal of wool sixty dollars, and in two there would be," and Marcela commenced to count on her fingers,—but Lucia, shortening the arithmetical operation said: "One hundred and twenty."

"Well then, Señora, one hundred and twenty, ah! how much money"

"How much did you tell me that they advanced you?"

"Ten dollars, Señora."

"Then for ten dollars they exact now one hundred and twenty? Inhuman creatures!"

As she spoke Marcela's husband Juan ran up excitedly. Entering without ceremony he threw himself at Lucia's feet. Marcela sprang up and Lucia exclaimed: "What is the matter with you? What has happened?"

And the poor Indian, between sobs and fatigue could hardly gasp out: "My daughter, Señora! The collector!"

Marcela, beside herself with terror, on comprehending the import of these words, fell on her knees exclaiming: "Mercy, Señora, mercy. The collector has carried off my daughter, my little one, because he did not find the wool! Ay, ay!"

"Inhuman, merciless men!" exclaimed

Lucia, unable to understand the degree of inhumanity shown by these dishonest dealers. Giving her hand to the afflicted parents, she tried to calm them, saying in kindly tones: "But if they have only taken away the child why do you despair so? They will soon return her. Juan will take them the money; all will be arranged in peace and he will praise God for consenting to the evil that we may better appreciate the good. Be calm!"

"No, Señora, no!"—replied the Indian, a little recovered from his confusion—"Because if we go late we will never see our daughter again. Here they sell them to the 'Majenos'* and they are taken to Arequipa."

"Great God! Is it possible!"—exclaimed Lucia, raising her hands to heaven.

At that moment the noble figure of Don Fernando appeared at the door in time to hear the last words of his wife, who, on seeing him threw herself into his arms saying: "Fernando, Fernando mine; we cannot live here, and if you insist we will live fighting the bloody battle of the good against the bad. Oh let us save them! Look at these unfortunate parents. It was to help them that I asked you for the two hundred dollars, but before I could make use of the money their youngest daughter has been carried away to be sold. Oh, Fernando, help me, because you believe in God, and God ordains charity before everything else."

"Señor, Señor!"—broke in Juan and

* Traders from the Valley of Majes who deal in liquors.

Marcela with one voice, wringing their hands, while Margarita cried in silence.

"Do you know where the collector carried your daughter?"—inquired Don Fernando, turning to Juan and trying to hide his feelings, for he was not ignorant of the means employed by those men to gain their ends.

"Yes, Señor, they have gone to the Governor"—replied Juan.

"Well then, let us go. Follow me," ordered Don Fernando with manifest resolution, and he went out followed by Juan. Marcela was going to rush after them with Margarita, but Lucia detained her, saying:

"Poor mother, do not go; offer your pain to the author of resignation. Your affairs will be arranged to-day; I offer it, to you in the name of our blessed mother. Sit down. How much do you owe the priest?"

"For the interment of my mother-in-law—forty dollars, Señora."

"And for that he put an embargo on your potato crop?"

"No, Señora, for the revenue."

"For the Revenue? Then you would have remained debtors eternally?"

"So it is, Señora; but death can also play with the priest, for I have seen many priests, die and sleep in 'holy ground' without collecting their debts," replied Marcela, recovering gradually her attitude.

The simple philosophy of the Indian woman and her ideas of compensation made Lucia

smile. Calling a servant she gave him a written order telling him to bring the money immediately. She gave a glass of wine to Marcela and a slice of bread to Margarita, saying:

"You like sweet things, do you not? This is sweet bread with cinnamon, it is very nice."

Presently the servant returned with the money, and Lucia, taking forty dollars, gave them to Marcela saying:

"Take these, go, pay your debt to the priest. Do not speak of what has happened with the collector. If any one asks you where this money came from, say to them that a Christian gave it to you in the name of God, and nothing more. Do not stay; try to return soon."

Such were the emotions of Marcela that her hand trembled so she could hardly count the money, letting it fall, piece by piece, from one hand to the other.

CHAPTER X

If we attack the vices and evil habits of a people bred under the evil influences of Romanism without having first laid the foundation of good instruction based on the belief in a Supreme Being, we shall see rise up an impregnable wall of selfish resistance, and shall behold the peaceable lambs of night transformed into ravenous wolves.

If we say to the cannibals that they must not eat the flesh of their prisoners, without having first given them some notions of humanity, of fraternal love and the dignity with which man respects the rights of other men, we shall probably very soon become ourselves food for these savages. We may judge that it is only a modified form of that same savage instinct which prompted that which occurred in Killac,—and in all the small country places in the interior of Peru, where the scarcity of schools, the lack of good faith among the priests and the manifest depravity of those who traffic with ignorance and the consequent submission of the masses, each day remove those places farther away from the centres of true civilisation.

Don Fernando presented himself with Juan at the house of the Governor, who, surrounded by a crowd of people, was dispatching affairs of what he called "highest importance." The people filed away quietly one by one, until Pancorbo and Señor Marin were left alone.

Near the door of the house was a trembling little girl who, on seeing Juan enter, rushed to him as if pursued by a pack of hounds.

Don Fernando entered, serious and thoughtful. He was a distinguished person in the social circles of the Peruvian capital. His physiognomy indicated a man, just, intelligent, and as prudent as sagacious. Rather tall, with regular features and fair complexion, hazel eyes and straight nose, broad open brow and chestnut hair; dressed in a suit of fine cassimire made by a famous tailor in Arequipa. His appearance indicated what he was: a well-bred Peruvian gentleman.

Taking off his hat politely as he entered the Governor's office, he extended his hand and said: "Excuse me Don Sebastian, if I interrupt your work, but the fulfilment of a duty of humanity brings me to solicit of you that this man's little daughter, who has been taken, without doubt, as security for a debt, be restored to him and the author of this crime punished."

"Take a seat, Don Fernando, and let us talk at our ease. These Indians must not hear these things, really," responded Don Sebastian seating himself nearer Don Fernando and

speaking in a low voice. "It is true they have taken away the little girl; she is here, but, really, this is only a stratagem to oblige them to pay for some alpaca which they owe for a year now."

"But they have assured me, Señor Governor, that this debt comes from some ten dollars which were arbitrarily left in their house last year, and now they are desired to pay for two 'quintales' of wool the value of which is about one hundred and twenty dollars," replied Don Fernando seriously.

"Do you not know that this is the custom, and a legitimate business? Really, I advise you not to uphold these Indians," argued Pancorbo.

"But, Don Sebastian—"

"And finally, to make everything clear, this money belongs to Don Claudio Paz."

"Señor Paz is my friend; I will speak with him."

"That is another thing; so, really, for the present we have finished," said Don Sebastian, rising from his seat.

"No Señor, I wish you to have the little girl returned to her father. Will you accept my word for the money?"

"Certainly, certainly, Don Fernando, they shall give the little girl to Juan, and you will sign a paper," replied Don Sebastian going to the table, and taking a sheet of paper put it before the other, saying: "This is not from want of confidence, but, really, it is necessary;

you know the saying, that strict accounts preserve friendship."

Don Fernando went to the table, wrote a few lines, signed them, and passed the paper to Don Sebastian, who, adjusting his spectacles, read it over carefully, then folding and putting it into his pocket, he turned to Don Fernando and said:

"Very well, really, everything is arranged, Señor Marin; my respects to Señora Lucia."

"Thank you. Good-day," replied Don Fernando politely, giving his hand to the Governor, and as he went out, he shook off the dust of that manufactory of abuses. With him went Juan carrying little Rosalia in his arms.

Scarcely had Don Fernando left the office of the Governor, when the wife of the latter came in, and taking him by the arm very firmly said:

"I cannot endure it any longer, Sebastian; you will make me as miserable as the wife of Pilate, condemning so many just people and scrawling on so much paper that you had better let alone."

"Woman!" said Don Sebastian roughly; but she continued:

"I understand just what you are all making up against poor Don Fernando and his family, and I ask you to leave it off; leave it for God's sake, Sebastian. Remember that our son would be ashamed to-morrow."

"Leave off, woman, you are always with these songs—Really, women should never mix

themselves up with men's business; they had better keep to their needles and pots and pans," answered her husband angrily. But Doña Petronila continued:

"Yes, that is what they all say to hush up the voice of their own heart and good counsel, throwing to one side all healthy advice. Remember, Sebastian," she added, striking the table with the palm of her hand as she went out with a disdainful glance at her husband.

"Puff," roared Don Sebastian, and he proceeded calmly to roll up a cigarette.

CHAPTER XI

Doña Petronila Hinojosa who was married, according to the Ritual of the Romish Church, to Don Sebastian Pancorbo, was on the threshold of forty years. Her countenance revealed, at the first glance, a kindly heart and soul which, under other conditions and more favourable circumstances, would have blossomed out in noble aspirations and good deeds.

Doña Petronila was always one of the best attired women in Killac. Her dress of coffee coloured merino was trimmed with numerous narrow ruffles; her cashmere shawl of red and black plaid with long heavy fringe was fastened on the right side with a silver brooch in the form of an eagle.

Doña Petronila is the type of the true provincial woman, sympathetic, open-hearted and generous; ever ready to share the sorrows of all, let them be friend or stranger; a type unknown on the Peruvian coast, where elegance in dress and more refined manners and customs do not allow a just idea of that class of women who possess hearts of gold and angel souls enshrined in a bust of clay badly modelled.

Doña Petronila, carefully educated, would have been a notable person socially. In reality she was a precious jewel lost among the stones and rocks of Killac.

If, generally speaking, woman is a rough diamond and it belongs to man and education to convert her into a brilliant, to nature also is given a large share in the unfolding of the best sentiments of woman when she becomes a mother.

Doña Petronila was the mother of a youth of marked intelligence, who must have inherited the virtues of his mother, for, be it by the grace of predestination, or be it because God in His mercy had helped him to conquer in the battle between good and evil, the fact remains that he had kept himself from being contaminated by the oppressive current of depravity which exists in small towns called, with good reason, great "infiernos." (Hells).

CHAPTER XII

Marcela, on going to the priest's house accompanied by her graceful daughter Margarita and carrying the forty silver dollars, found the priest Pascual seated near the door of his office, by an old, rough pine table covered with a cloth which might have been blue in ages past. He held in his right hand a breviary with the forefinger inserted in the volume, while he mechanically recited the prayer of the day.

Marcela approached with timid step and gave the customary salute: "Hail, Mary most holy! Father," and bent down to kiss the hand of the priest, telling Margarita to do the same. The priest, fixing his eyes on the young girl, replied: "Conceived without sin!" then added: "Where did you find this young girl so bright and blooming?"

"She is my daughter, Father," replied Marcela.

"And how is it that I am not acquainted with her?" inquired Father Pascual patting the girl's face.

"It is because I seldom come here, for I had

not paid our debt; that is why you do not remember her, father."

"And how old is she?"

"I have counted some fourteen years since her baptism, Señor padre."

"Ah, then it was not I who sprinkled her; it is hardly six years since I came. And, well, this year you will put her into the service of the church, will you not? She can begin by washing the dishes and attending to other little things."

"Father!"

"And you, lazy one, when do you begin the mita? Is it not already your turn?" said the priest, fixing his covetous eyes on Marcela.

"Yes, Father," said the woman trembling.

"Or, have you come to stay now?"

"Not yet, father, I have come to pay the forty dollars for the burial of my mother-in-law, that our potato crop may be free."

"Ah, ah! So we have money, eh? Who visited your house last night?"

"No one, Father."

"No one, eh? Some deception you have practised upon your husband, and I will teach you better than to enter upon such mischief with certain people, so setting a bad example to this girl."

"Do not speak so, Father!" exclaimed the woman entreatingly, lowering her eyes and blushing, and at the same time putting forty dollars upon the table.

On seeing the money, the priest, for a

moment, forgot his first idea and dropping the breviary which he had kept under his arm, began to count and examine the money. When he had satisfied himself as to the quantity and quality of the money, and put it safely away, he turned to Marcela again and said: "Well, here are the forty dollars, and now tell me, woman, where did you get this money? Who went to your house last night?"

"Do not speak so, Father; wrong judgment coming from the lips oppresses the breast like a stone."

"Indian! Who has taught you these sayings? Speak plainly!"

"No one, Father, my soul is clean."

"And where did you get this money? You cannot deceive me. I will know all about it."

"A Christian, Father," answered Marcela lowering her eyes and pretending to cough.

"A Christian! There is a cat in the bag here."

"Speak,—because I—wish to return you the money."

"The Señora Lucia lent it to me; but now give me the change that I may go," said Marcela, timid for having broken, by that revelation, the first command of her benefactress.

And the priest, on hearing the name of the wife of Señor Marin, said, as if stung by the viper of spite.

"Change? What change? Some other day I will give it to you." And biting his

lips with repressed passion murmured "Lucia! Lucia!"

The priest returned to his seat, taking little notice of the submissive leave-taking of Marcela and her daughter.

CHAPTER XIII

The return of Don Fernando to his house was the cause of rejoicing. He came triumphantly with Juan and Rosalia; he was to receive manifestations of gratitude from his wife; to taste the satisfaction of having performed a good act; to inhale the perfumed air which sweetens the hours that follow those in which one has consoled the unfortunate or dried their tears.

Lucia wept for joy. Her tears was the blessed rain that gives peace and happiness to noble hearts.

Juan knelt before the Señor Marin and bade Rosalia kiss the hands of those who had saved her.

Don Fernando contemplated for a moment the picture before him with a tender heart, then seated himself upon the sofa saying to his wife: "I seldom deceive myself, my dear; I believe that Don Sebastian is deeply wounded in his self esteem by my intervention in favour of these people."

"I do not doubt it, Fernando; but what can he do by way of reprisal?" replied Lucia passing her hand over his hair.

"Badly done, very badly done!" said Lucia greatly annoyed.

"This is clearer than that of the Governor, my dear, because if Don Pascual agreed to arrange it, what does it matter that he knows that you gave the money?" explained her husband.

"He said he would give the change another day," continued Marcela. "He seemed quite pleased with Margarita, said she must soon enter the service of the church."

"Margarita!" exclaimed Lucia without trying to hide her annoyance.

"Yes, Señora," replied Marcela, taking Margarita by the hand and presenting her to them.

The glance of Don Fernando rested searchingly upon the face of Margarita as he said to his wife: "Have you noticed the peculiar beauty of this girl?"

"Have I not, Fernando? From the time I first saw her I have been deeply interested in her."

"This child ought to be carefully educated," said Don Fernando, taking the hand of Margarita who, silently, as a carnation, showed her beauty and diffused the perfume of her charms.

"She is going to be our god child, Fernando," said Lucia.

"We shall speak about that to-morrow; for to-day go and rest calmly," said Don Fernando rising, and the family of Yupanqui took leave,

renewing their expressions of gratitude; "may God reward and bless you!"

"How old is Margarita?" inquired Don Fernando of Lucia when they were alone.

"Her mother says she is fourteen, but her form, her beauty, the fire of her eyes, all indicate a more advanced age."

"That is not strange, my dear, in this climate. But now we must think of something else. You remember that we owe several visits to Doña Petronila, and I would like to go to-night, so perhaps she will not retain a bad impresssion from what Don Sebastian may have told her."

"As you like, Fernando; Doña Petronila is an excellent woman. As regards the money, I entreat you to arrange with the Governor and pay him; you know what these people are when a dollar escapes their hands. See how the priest remained in peace after receiving the money. Here is the remainder of the two hundred dollars that I asked of you."

"I will take care that everything is arranged and the money delivered."

"Fernando, how good you are! I will tell Doña Petronila so if the opportunity offers. And, by the way, they tell me that her son will arrive soon."

"I am very sorry, because a young man living here very soon becomes ruined."

"Well, Fernando, I am going to change my dress, but will not keep you waiting long.

CHAPTER XIV

As soon as Marcela had left his house the priest called a "pongo," and said to him: "Run quickly to the house of Don Sebastian and tell him that I wish to see him immediately —to come with the friends. Then go to the house of Don Estéfano and tell him to come. Afterwards make up the fire and put on the chocolate dish, then tell Manuela and Bernarda to prepare themselves."

"Yes, Father!" and the "pongo" went out with the air of a postillion.

"Don Sebastian happened to be just leaving his house, wrapped in his everlasting cape, when the messenger arrived, and after hearing the message, said to the "pongo," "Go back home, I will tell the friends." So saying, he turned towards the house of Estéfano; nevertheless, the "pongo," to fulfil the order of his master, went also to the house, then with his quick step returned instantly home, going directly to the kitchen to finish the second part of his duties there.

When Pancorbo entered the house of Estéfano Benites he found him seated at a small table

playing cards with the same friends who had been with him at the Governor's house.

As soon as Estéfano heard the message of priest Pascual, he threw the cards upon the table saying : " Let us go, comrades, the church calls us ! "

They all went out together, just as Don Sebastian appeared, who, saluting them, said : " I am pleased to meet you altogether ; really, our priest needs us."

" Come on, then ; perhaps he needs someone to help him in the ' dominus vobiscum,' " added Benites, and, laughing at the joke, all continued their way.

The influence exercised by the priest in these places is such that their word almost ranks as a sacred command, and such is the docility of character of the Indian that, although in the privacy of their cabins, they criticise certain acts of the priest, yet the power of superstition wielded by them overpowers all reason and makes their word the law of their followers.

The house of Benites was only three blocks from the parochial residence, so the priest had not long to wait, and at the first notice of their arrival went to the door to receive his visitors.

" Good afternoon, gentlemen ! This is what I like ; people who are attentive," giving his hand to each one.

" At your service, holy father," responded all in chorus, taking off their hats.

" Take seats ; here Don Sebastian, there Don

Estéfano ; make yourselves comfortable, gentlemen," with a great show of hospitality.

"Thanks, we are quite comfortable. Really, Father, you are very amiable!"

"Well, gentlemen, affairs are precipitating themselves upon us, and I am obliged to trouble you," continued the priest, turning about as if seeking something.

"It is no trouble, Father," replied everyone.

"Yes, gentlemen, but we are not going to talk with our throats dry," and taking a bunch of keys he opened a cupboard and took out some bottles and glasses. Putting them on the table, he said: "This is a little liquor with 'anis ;' it will do us no harm."

"You are very kind, Father, but, really, do not trouble yourself; let the young men serve," suggested Don Sebastian, and at the word Estéfano hastened to take the bottle and began to serve the company while the priest seated himself by Don Sebastian.

"To your health, gentlemen!"

"To yours, father ;" and the brimming glasses were drained.

"An excellent drink. Really, it is very good," said Don Sebastian, and his opinion was echoed by all.

Raising his empty glass, Father Pascual began: "Well, children, they have humiliated me beyond measure, throwing in my face the money which the Indian Yupanqui owed me, about which we were talking the other day."

"How? What? This is insupportable,

Father! Really! The same happened to-day with me," said Don Sebastian. "It is a direct attack upon Father Pascual and the Governor," broke in Estéfano. "No, no, we will not consent!"

"We must punish them, really," said Don Sebastian, tapping on the floor with the heel of his boot.

"Yes, children, it is too much to permit them to take the eyes out of our head before we are dead," continued the priest.

"Let us act at once! Tell us what we can do," said Escobedo helping himself to another glass, saying to Estéfano, in an undertone: "What luck! They left the bottle uncorked."

"I will direct the campaign!" shouted Estéfano with enthusiasm.

"If you wish I am ready also," said the Governor.

"Let us work separately," suggested the priest, accepting the glass which Escobedo offered him; and from that moment each one began to drink at their pleasure until it was necessary to open the cupboard again for a fresh supply of bottles.

The effect of the liquor soon became apparent in excited spirits and heated discourses.

Father Pascual called the "pongo" to him and said quietly: "Has the water boiled?"

"Yes Father; and the Señora has come."

"Very well. Tell her to pass into the alcove and await me there; and you bring everything ready."

The "pongo," accustomed to that kind of service, quickly brought the cups and tea pot well filled.

"Let us take a cup of tea, gentleman," said the priest.

"So much trouble!" responded several at once.

"I will take charge of this," offered Escobedo, taking the tea pot.

"Now that we are going to treat the business seriously, we have done wrong in all coming here together," said Estéfano in a tone of caution.

"That is true; we must go out separately," observed Escobedo.

"It would be well to call the sexton and explain the thing falsely," suggested the priest, swallowing his tea quickly.

"We must give a final and decisive blow, really," added Don Sebastian.

"Without missing our aim, as happened in the case of the Frenchman."

"The business is, attack and take without their getting away; Don Fernando, Doña Lucia, and . . . . . "

"Kill them!"

"Bravo!"

The sound of several cups dashed upon their saucers formed an accompaniment to that criminal plot in which sentence of death was passed upon Don Fernando Marin and his wife.

The priest added: "This warning to the

sexton is indispensable, so that I need not appear."

"Yes, Father. We will say that some highwaymen are planning to attack the church, and he must be ready to ring the alarm at the first notice," said Benites.

"Very well. I will take charge of the signal," volunteered Escobedo.

"It would be a good plan to spread the notice all over the town in different forms; really, we must take all precautions in regard to future investigations," observed Pancorbo.

Various comments followed, such as "I will say that they are going to rob the priest's house." "I, that a disbanded battalion is coming."

"I will say that a band from Arequipa wish to carry off our immaculate Virgin."

"Magnificent! But the people will go to church!"

"No Señor! That is to bring them together, —and afterwards we will say that the robbers have taken refuge at Don Fernando's, and . . 'cataplum'!" explained Benites.

"Yes. That is good; the rest will rush at once, because when people are excited they do not wait to reason," said Father Pascual, offering a glass to Estéfano and another to Escobedo.

"We must not forget to compromise the judge. I will go there and deceive him," offered Benites.

"Now let us go."

"Be prudent, children," said the priest warningly, as they retired quietly, going in different directions.

Pascual and the Governor remained talking privately, not forgetting to refresh themselves with the liquor that remained.

"That boy Benites is worth money! Audacious and careful," observed the priest.

"True, Father. That matter of the judge we were forgetting. It is true that the young men of to-day know a great deal."

"Good-night, Father, it is time to retire, and really the night is cold."

"Take a sleeping draught," said Don Pascual, filling two glasses and passing one to Don Sebastian.

Half an hour later, in the saloons and all places where drink abounded, might be heard the sound of revelry and disputes, and dancing guided by the silvery guitar.

And the victims designed for the sacrifice, with peace in their souls and felicity in their loving hearts, went at that same hour to the house of Don Sebastian,—their secret enemy,—to visit his wife.

CHAPTER XV

The sun of happiness and joy illuminated the house of Doña Petronila with its purest rays. Doña Petronila was a happy mother, because she had folded in her arms, after a long absence, her son Manuel; the dream of her sleeping hours, the comfort of her sad days,—the son of her heart.

Manuel, who went away from Killac a boy, had returned grown into a noble man, serious and thoughtful, for he had made the very best of his student life in Lima.

Manual was found seated at his mother's side her hands clasped in his as he gazed upon her with the tenderest satisfaction, while they conversed confidentially on family matters.

Don Fernando and Doña Lucia appeared at the door. On seeing them, mother and son rose to their feet to receive their visitors.

"Señora Lucia, Señor Marin, this is my son who went away a little lad. You will hardly recognize him; he has just arrived after an absence of seven years. Please take seats," indicating the sofa.

"What a pleasant young man is your son,

Doña Petronila," observed Lucia when all were seated.

Manuel was a youth of twenty summers, of medium height, pleasant countenance and sonorous but sweet voice that at once won the sympathy and attention of his hearers. His eyes and moustache were dark and his speech and manners pleasant.

"Have you chosen a profession?" asked Don Fernando addressing Manuel.

"Yes, Señor Marin, I am studying law and am in the second year. I expect to be a lawyer if fortune favours me," replied Manuel modestly.

"I congratulate you, my friend. The vast field of jurisprudence offers charms to an intelligent person."

"Any other profession, also, Señor, if you consecrate to it your will and your love," responded Manuel.

At this moment they heard the report of fire arms which frightened the ladies and excited the men.

Lucia took her husband's arm quickly, saying: "Come, come, Fernando, let us go."

"Yes, yes, Señora, go quickly and secure well the entrance to your house," said Doña Petronila confusedly.

"But what can it be?" asked Manuel.

"It is something unusual here," observed Don Fernando. And Lucia exclaimed, "It may be robbers!"

"Let us go," said Don Fernando, offering his arm to his wife. But Manuel interposed,

asking that he might be permitted to accompany the señora and giving her his arm.

The three went away together.

Doña Petronila said to herself: "My mother's heart cannot remain calm while my Manuel is out of the house," and she followed the group at a little distance with cautious steps."

Manuel, who from the first had been strongly drawn towards the Señor and Señora Marin, remarked: "Señora, I, who on arriving at Killac, thought I should die of loneliness, have found it brightened and cheered by the presence of yourself and of your husband."

"Thanks, sir. You have well learned the gallant phrases of the city," replied Lucia smiling.

"No, Señora! My words are wanting in the gallantry of mere form. Apart from yourselves and my mother, with whom can I associate here? This afternoon I have become acquainted with some of the neighbours of the town, and it has given me sorrow and compassion."

"That is quite true, Don Manuel, but you have your parents and will have us for friends."

"Yes, Don Manuel; for a person who comes from the city, it is very lonely. You are right," said Don Fernando. "Only I am afraid we shall not remain here very long, because I think Fernando's business will soon be arranged," answered Lucia.

"So much the worse for us if I had to prolong my stay here, which I expect now will only be about six months," said Manuel.

Don Fernando stepped forward to open the street door, having arrived at their house.

"Come in and rest, Manuel," said Lucia.

"No thank you, Señora. My mother will be anxious about me if I tarry and I wish to save her all anxiety," replied Manuel.

"Our house is yours, friend," offered Don Fernando.

"Thanks. I appreciate your kindness, and will give myself the pleasure of a visit very soon. Good-night!" replied Manuel shaking hands with his friends and disappearing in the dark streets of Killac.

Don Fernando and Lucia took some precautions about securing the house, but seeing that all seemed tranquil retired to sleep.

The surface of a crystalline lake, wherein is reflected the image of passing birds, is not so placid as the sleep with which they were soothed by the Angel of Love beating his ivory wings over the brows of Lucia and Fernando. Their hearts, linked together in peace, throbbed happily in unison.

But this sleep was not like the eternal stupor of matter. The spirit which does not sleep, struggled with the power of presentiment; that mysterious warning voice of good souls shook the sensitive organism of Lucia and awoke her, inspiring her with hesitation, fear, doubt,—all that complicated array of sensations which comes to one during nights of sleeplessness. Lucia felt those nervous tremblings which indicated to her some unknown danger and her

thoughts turned at once to the subject most dear to her,—her husband. She waited and watched. The old town clock gave the twelve strokes that mark the midnight hour; the next moment vibrated on the midnight air the heavy tones of the church bell. Its brazen voice did not invite to quiet prayer and rest of soul;—it called the neighbours to assault and battle, according to the agreement between Estéfano and the sexton who waited in the tower. And like the hail which the black clouds pour upon the defenceless earth, stones and balls began to rain down upon the undefended home of Fernando Marin.

A thousand shadows crossed and recrossed the yard and street in different directions, and a deafening roar went up like a gigantic wave which the tempest raises on the bosom of the angry sea to break with a voice of thunder on the rocky coast. The mob was terrifying. The voices of command, hoarse and contradictory, could be heard above the noise of stones and shot and balls.

"Foreigners!" "Robbers!" "Meddlers!" "Let them die!" "Kill them!" shouted hundreds of voices. And the clanging tones of the alarm bell were the only response to all these wild cries.

Lucia and Fernando abandoned their peaceful bed, clad only in their scanty night robes and the little they could catch up in passing, to fly from, or fall into the hands of their implacable enemies, to suffer a cruel death in the midst of that multitude, drunk with alcohol and wrath.

CHAPTER XVI

Juan Yupanpui and Marcela, with their daughters, on leaving the house of Don Fernando on that eventful day, went cheerily on their way towards their humble cabin. For them the gray clouds were gone and the sun was shining brightly; the birds of hope were singing gaily in their hearts.

The priest had been paid; the collectors satisfied and their little Rosalia restored again to their arms.

The sad foreboding; the gloomy thoughts of suicide; all the evil desperate thoughts that had filled the mind of Juan, implanted there by the exactions and abuses of the priest, the governor and the collectors;—that terrible trinity,—the personification of injustice,—had been driven away by the charitable kindness of a loving woman and a noble man.

The angel of peace seemed to have folded her wings and taken rest in their humble cabin that night.

When the little group had seated themselves, Rosalia on her father's knee, Juan said to Marcela: "Let us recite the prayer of thanks-

giving, and I swear to you that I will dedicate my strength and my life to our benefactors."

"And I will serve you while I live," said Marcela.

"And I also, mama," added Margarita.

After explaining to Rosalia those wicked men would have taken her far away if it had not been for the supplications of Don Fernando and Doña Lucia of the "big house," all four knelt, and with hands raised to heaven, offered the beautiful prayer of blessing and thanksgiving.

While Marcela and Margarita prepared the humble supper, the conversation turned upon the good fortune of Margarita, who was to be the god child of Lucia, and many bright plans were made and visions of happiness passed before their minds, as they discussed the future.

Having finished their supper they sought their hard bed—a long brick platform—to dream their happy days.

And while these slept let us see what was happening in the parochial house:

CHAPTER XVII

A black shadow, impatient and excited, paced from one end of the dark room to the other, for the priest had not the courage to light the lamp of linseed oil, then in use, or the tallow candle of home manufacture. Crime always loves the darkness of night.

Nearly in front of a small window, the wood work of which was painted yellow, was placed an old "catre," or folding bed, the sides made of the precious Zumbaillo wood and covered with some ancient silk damask curtains. The wide comfortable bed, with its curious covering of a patch work quilt made of a thousand samples of Cashmere of divers colours ingeniously combined by some busy woman or the hand of some holy sister of the city, was half open and in a certain degree of disorder.

By the side of the bed, seated upon a wooden bench, was a woman who had been clandestinely admitted by the "pongo" early in the evening.

Father Pascual was waiting for the result of the plans formed by him—waiting in darkness that no suspicion might fall on him by a light being seen at that hour of the night.

Once in a while he would pause with his ear at a crack in the window.

"What is the matter with you, man of God? I have never seen you so restless as you are to-night!" the woman ventured to say.

"Did you not hear that shot?" stammered the priest, for the liquor was taking effect, and impeded him from speaking clearly.

"That shot? But that was hours ago, and everything is tranquil now," argued the woman.

"They might rob the church; bad news was brought me this afternoon by the neighbours," said the priest, with the idea of deceiving the woman, for the thought of appearing innocent still filled his brain.

"Robbers in Killac, robbers for the church! Ha, ha!" exclaimed the woman loudly.

"Hush, woman of my sins!" hissed the priest with manifest anger, stamping on the floor with his foot.

An owl passed that night over the roof of the parochial house, flapping his dark wings and proclaiming ill fortune in that dismal croak which is the terror of simple minded people.

* * * * * * * * *

Don Sebastian had not returned home.

Doña Petronila summoned two servants to send in search of her husband, to accompany him home; but Manuel said, taking his hat and cane: "I will go, mother."

"By no means; I will not consent. Alas, my son! I do not know what my heart warns me of. That shot, the prolonged absence of your

father; the comings and goings of Estéfano—all keep me preoccupied," said Doña Petronila mournfully.

But Manuel, inspired by the nobleness of his sentiments, and perhaps by a double desire, replied: "For that same reason I should go in search of Don Sebastian and take him away from danger or from foolish engagements."

"It would be useless, my son; you do not understand his obstinate disposition. O! I beg you, Manuel, I implore you, to remember that your duty commands you to take care of me; I am your mother; do not leave me alone; in God's name I ask it!"

"Very well, I will not go, mother," replied Manuel taking off his hat.

"In that case perhaps I can go to sleep," said his mother, with a sigh of relief.

"Go to bed, mother, the night is cold and it is late."

"Go to your room, my son. Good-night!" said Doña Petronila looking at her son with much satisfaction.

CHAPTER XVIII

At the first tones of the bell and the report of the firearms, the servants of Don Fernando fled in terror, for they understood that the point of attack was their master's house.

Don Fernando prepared for defence, and went to take down a rifle well supplied with ammunition; but Lucia interposed supplicatingly, repeating in anguish: "No, Fernando mine, no! Save yourself; save me; let us save ourselves."

"But what shall I do, my dear? There is no remedy. We shall die defenceless," he replied trying to calm his wife.

"Let us flee, Fernando."

"Where to, my dear Lucia? The entrance to the house is already gained," said he, putting a box of cartridges into the pocket of his trousers.

The shouts were repeated in the streets, each time more terrible and implacable.

"Highwaymen!" "Foreigners!" "To the death!" were some of the words that rose above the wild roar of this whirlwind of passion, a drunken mob.

Suddenly a new voice was heard, fresh and clear; free from the effects of alcohol which, with all the confidence and serenity of courage, said: "Leave this place, you miserable men! No one shall be assassinated here!"

And another voice, supporting the first, saying: "We have been deceived. There are no such robbers!"

"Come to this side, all honest men!" shouted imperatively the first voice.

At that moment a woman came up provided with a lantern containing a tallow candle which gave a faint light. The shots and the clanging of the bell ceased. People began to disperse in different directions, and the reaction of the mob was complete.

The entrance to the house of Don Fernando was totally destroyed and great piles of stones lay beside the doors, which were entirely demolished.

"Bring that lantern here!" cried a man, opening a passage through the remaining groups of men. By the faint light shed by the lantern Manuel recognized his mother.

"Mother! You here?" he exclaimed in surprise.

"My son, here I am at your side," replied Doña Petronila, her face full of horror.

She gave the lantern to her son and together they began to look for the dead and wounded.

The first body they found was that of an Indian, and at his feet was a woman bathed in blood and tears, shrieking in desperation: "Ay!

Ay! They have killed my husband, and they will have murdered also my protectors!"

* * * * *

At the sound of the first shot, Juan and Marcela had rushed over to help protect the house of Don Fernando. Juan fell pierced by a ball which passed through his right lung. Marcela had a wound in the shoulder from which the blood was streaming. Near to them lay the bodies of three other Indians.

"Mother!" called Manuel, "This Indian woman will die in a few minutes if she does not have help immediately."

"Let us take her away from here and bring the doctor to see her," replied Doña Petronila.

"Here, some men!" shouted Manuel, and several men presented themselves offering to carry Marcela.

Manuel, the intrepid youth who had defied the drunken populace, opened a passage, and restrained the mob, saying himself as he saw the solicitude of all to gather up the dead and attend to the wounded: "The assault was the fruit of an error more worthy of pardon than punishment."

Several men raised Marcela, now almost helpless, to take her where she could be treated.

"Slowly, carefully," said Doña Petronila.

"Ay! Ay! Where do you take me?" asked Marcela covering her wound with one hand;—then burst out: "My daughters! Rosa! Margarita!"

"What has become of Don Fernando and

Doña Lucia?" asked Manuel with growing interest; and at that moment the light of a new day began to flicker faintly on the faces of the innocent victims and of the guilty instigators of the foul crime.

CHAPTER XIX

Some one else beside Manuel was interested in knowing what fate had befallen the family of Señor Marin. And that was the priest Pascual, who performed prodigies of invention, in order to smooth over explanations with Doña Melitona the woman who had accompanied him that fearful night.

As soon as the bell was silent and the shots had ceased, Pascual said to himself: "By this time some result has been obtained." Turning to Melitona and endeavouring to speak quietly, he said: "The tumult seems to be finished eh?"

"Yes. It seems to have passed away, but what a fright I have had!" said Melitona.

"And I not less, from the moment I heard the first shot, believing that they were attacking the church, and you were so unbelieving."

"Happily we soon persuaded ourselves that it was somewhere else. And what if I had permitted you to go out?"

"Heaven protect me! You did well, Melitona, in keeping me here."

"And what will have been the trouble?" asked the woman innocently.

"O! Political matters. Thanks to God that I did not go out. Thanks, thanks," repeated the priest, burning with a desire to know the result of the attack but not daring to let his anxiety be known.

As soon as the day began to break and people were heard passing in the streets, he said to the woman: "Melitona! You, who are a woman, must be full of curiosity; go and find out what really occurred last night. It seems to me it must have been over in the direction of the house of Señor Marin. I must prepare for celebrating mass."

"I will go at once," replied Melitona, quite contented with her commission.

She crossed herself three times, put on her mantle of brown cashmere with a black border, and went out.

The first persons she met gave her an account of the assault on the house of Don Fernando Marin; but desirous of carrying to the parochial house, news of what she had seen with her own eyes, she introduced herself into the very scene of the conflict.

"Jesus! What temerity! What heretics can have done this? Poor Señor Marin! Poor Señora Lucia! See, everything destroyed," she said, walking about amongst the ruins before the door.

Don Fernando and Doña Lucia, safe and sound, were in the office surrounded by a group of anxious and indignant people. Manuel with all the indignation of his pure heart and the

fire of youth exclaimed: "Such iniquity is inconceivable, Don Fernando. These are an ignorant and barbarous people, and your salvation is nothing short of a miracle. Tell us how you saved yourselves."

"The miracle is Lucia's," responded Don Fernando dryly, tying his cravat, which, in the confusion, had become loose, and pacing back and forth through the room.

"Señora Lucia," said Manuel, turning towards the sofa where that lady reclined, the deepest emotion depicted on her countenance.

Don Fernando, as if following the course of his thoughts, continued: "What horror! Many know what it is to awake in the night in the midst of tumult and confusion, strife and bloodshed, because the country witnesses and allows these uprisings and civil conflicts, which, now in one name now in another, bring terror and grief, be it in the dawn of revolution or in the strongholds resisting an attack, but few understand what it is to awake from tranquil, happy sleep, amid the leaden hail and the shouts of cut-throats coming from the walls of their own dwelling."

"Enough, Don Fernando, enough!" cried several voices in chorus.

"What an atrocity!" added Manuel.

Don Fernando, answering Manuel's first question which at first had been unheeded, in the natural tumult of thoughts, said: "I was resolved, Don Manuel, to sacrifice myself and fight to the last, but the tears of my good

wife made me think of saving myself in order to save her also. We both fled by the left side of the house and took refuge behind a stone wall just in front of the place attacked. From there we witnessed the assault upon our house, the massacre of Juan and Marcela, your own heroism and the maternal abnegation of Doña Petronila."

"Poor Juan! Poor Marcela! Now that misfortune has made us sisters, my tenderest solicitude will be for her and her daughters," said Lucia sighing sadly.

"Yes. Margarita and Rosalia, these poor doves without a nest, shall find from to-day the protection of a father in this house," affirmed Don Fernando.

"Let Marcela be brought here and attended to carefully," said Lucia tenderly, and, turning to Manuel, added: "Manuel, I entreat you in the name of friendship to take charge of this." To which Manuel responded with all the vehemence of youth.

"I go this moment, Señora. You, good angel, will staunch the wounds of the widow, and we, Don Fernando, will bring to account those who are culpable."

On uttering these last words a mortal paleness overspread his countenance. The name of Don Sebastian crossed his mind; Sebastian, the husband of his mother, the man to whom he gave the name of 'father!'

Taking his hat mechanically, he saluted and went out quickly, passing on the way Doña

Melitona, who had listened from the door without losing a word.

Don Fernando seated himself beside his wife, on the sofa, and Melitona, thinking she had gleaned sufficient news, returned to inform the priest, who was impatiently awaiting her arrival,—"It was time to celebrate Mass!"

Melitona entered, and, taking off her mantle, began: "I bring everything hot, Father."

"Yes, Melitona? And how was it?"

"They say that Don Fernando had some business, I do not know what, with some wool buyers, and Don Sebastian put in his hand in favour of I do not know who, and from that came the dispute, and then a quarrel; and someone else thought they were robbers and rang the bells," related Melitona with numerous gestures and noddings of the head.

"It was private business, then; a good beating will I give the sexton and he will not be quite so quick with his bells another time," replied the priest.

"That is what they say, Father; but Don Sebastian's son, a young man recently arrived, was at the house of Don Fernando and very much at home he seemed to be. He says he will have the guilty ones punished."

"He said that?" asked the priest, biting his lips, and added to himself: "who lives longest knows most."

And the bells began to ring calling the people to mass.

CHAPTER XX

The entrance of Marcela, who was brought on a wooden stretcher,—wounded, widowed, followed by her two orphan daughters,—to the same house out of which she had gone only the day before, contented and happy, impressed Lucia so deeply that she could not restrain her tears, and she went weeping to receive Marcela. After seeing her comfortably installed in a neat room, she took Rosalia in her arms and caressed Margarita as she said to them both: "Poor precious daughters."

Seating herself by the side of Marcela, she said tenderly: "O my dear, how much resignation you need! I implore you to be calm and have patience."

"Señora, do you not fear to protect us?" asked the Indian woman faintly with a languid glance.

But Lucia, without answering this question, continued: "How weak you are," and, turning to two servants near the door, ordered them to prepare some chicken broth and toasted bread and beaten egg, and to give her every care.

The countenance of Marcela revealed her

terrible suffering, but the words of Lucia seemed to give her relief and strength. So great was the influence of that kind hearted woman over her that, although the doctor had declared her wound mortal and that the end might come soon—fever having already set in—still Marcela kept up her courage. So two days passed, giving at times a faint hope of saving the sick woman.

As Don Fernando entered one afternoon, Lucia, asked with great interest: "Fernando, what about the remains of Juan?"

"I have had them taken to the cemetery with all the honours that I could give, paying all expenses myself. I had them put in a provisional grave."

"And why provisional?"

"Because it is probable that the judge will have a new examination made, doubting whether my report is correct," replied Don Fernando, taking a paper out of his pocket.

"And what does this certificate say?" asked Lucia.

Don Fernando read: "Juan Yupanqui was killed instantly by the action of a projectile thrown from a certain height which had passed obliquely through both lungs."

"Will this report assist in the discovery of the perpetrator of the dead?"

"Alas, my dear, we have very little hope of accomplishing anything," replied her husband.

"And Father Pascual, what does he say?"

"Ugh! He had no more hesitancy in

saying the Responses over the tomb of Juan Yupanqui than I had in placing the humble wooden cross at his grave."

"Can he be ignorant of the details of the assault upon our house?"

"He ignorant! What an idea! I believe him implicated in the plot."

"And the judge?"

"The judge and the authorities have taken some measures, such as to store away the stones piled up at our door as evidence of the assault," replied Don Fernando laughing; but immediately a look of sorrow overspread his countenance, which indicated the deep deception he had undergone.

Perhaps all these doings had caused a feeling of scepticism to spring up in that noble, just heart.

Conversing thus they passed down the hall to Lucia's room where they seated themselves, Lucia on the sofa and Don Fernando in an arm chair.

"My dear, if there is a little 'chicha' with rice will you give me a glass?"

"In a moment, dear," said Lucia springing up and passing from the room,—returning quickly with a glass of milk sprinkled with cinnamon, a tempting looking beverage, which she presented to her husband.

Don Fernando drank it eagerly, put the glass upon the table, wiped his mouth with a perfumed handkerchief, and turning to his wife said: "What a comforting drink, my dear.

I do not know how it is that people prefer the beer of the country to this drink. But, returning to poor Juan, my dear, do you know that the poor Indian has awakened in me still greater interest since his death? They say that the Indians are ungrateful;—Juan Yupanqui has died in shewing his gratitude."

"For me," replied Lucia, "they have not entirely extinguished in Peru that race with principles of rectitude and nobleness that characterized the founders of the empire conquered by Pizarro. Another thing is that all the people who consider themselves of high rank here, have put the Indian in the same sphere as the beasts.

"In my opinion Juan was not an uncommon specimen of his race. If the dawn should ever break of the true autonomy of the Indian, we shall witness the regenerating evolution of a race to-day oppressed and humiliated," replied Don Fernando.

"I do not contradict you, Fernando. But, talking about the dead we are forgetting the living. I will go to see how Marcela is getting on."

CHAPTER XXI

Manuel did not give himself an hour's rest from the time the terrible events were initiated which moved all Killac.

As soon as he had seen Marcela taken to the house of Lucia, he devoted himself to the work of prudent investigation, employing in it all the sagacity he had learned in his college experience.

Therefore, he avoided an immediate explanation with Don Sebastian. He also remained away from the house of Señor Marin.

One morning, on returning home, taciturn and moody, he found his mother occupied in preparing some fish for the oven.

On seeing her son Doña Petronila said: "Manuel, do you remember how you used to like this kind of fish baked in the oven? For that reason I am preparing them myself."

"Thank you, mother. Send that to the oven, and listen to me in your room," said Manuel, to whose sad heart this tender thoughtfulness of his mother was a healing balsam. He went to his mother's room, saying to himself: "Blessed

be mothers! He who has not felt the caresses and received the kiss of a mother does not know what it is to love."

Entering the room he drew a chair to the table, threw himself down heavily, and, resting his elbows on the table, let his head fall upon his hands in a meditative manner. What combinations he had made! All the threads taken in the investigations practised among his associates, led him to see the true authors of the armed assault on the house of Don Fernando Marin, and among them stood boldly out the figures of Don Sebastian, the priest Pascual, and Estéfano Benites!

Doña Petronila came in and gave him a pat on the shoulder, saying: "You have been sleeping, Manuel."

Manuel, letting his arms fall, fixed his eyes on his mother with a loving expression, and rising to his feet, said: "No, mother, not at all; the restless spirit still keeps vigil. Sit down; let us talk a while;" drawing another chair beside his own he offered it to his mother.

"No, my son, I will sit here on this bench; I am more comfortable here," replied Doña Petronila, seating herself on a low seat covered with a piece of carpet.

"I can guess about what you are going to speak. What things have happened; until now my soul has hardly returned to its body; I am always seeing the faces of those dead Indians, bathed in blood and covered with dirt!"

"Ah, mother! With what fatal star have I

returned to witness such tragic events, but lamentations are useless; let us have brave hearts and perhaps we can remedy things somewhat, and try to save Don Sebastian," replied Manuel.

"Oh, my son! Why should I tell you all? Ever since they made your father Governor he has become another person. I can do nothing with him any more."

"Yes, I know, mother; I have understood it all from the moment I came home."

"Speak to him then. He will listen to you."

"I fear not. If I were truly his son, the voice of paternal love would speak in him—but —you know—"

"Why do you bring those things up now?" queried his mother shortly.

"Pardon me, mother. But now let us go to the root of the matter. You must help me; but with love; without bitter words or hard charges. Nothing of that; we must try to get him to leave the governorship; and for the rest I will take the results upon my shoulders. I have it all thought out. Now I must go and see the mischief working priest."

"Do not talk in that way of a priest; the excommunicated person is ruined."

"Mother, the man that prostitutes his ministry merits contempt."

"But let us not talk of him. We must work for Don Sebastian. Go to his room; try to speak to him and prepare his mind to receive me afterwards."

"Now, at once?" she asked.

"Yes, mother. There is no time to lose."

Doña Petronila went out slowly. On reaching the door of Don Sebastian's room she waited a moment outside, crossed herself, then entered.

Manuel remained in his mother's room walking up and down, thinking out his plans, because his interview with Don Sebastian would necessarily be rather hard for him.

At last Doña Petronila returned joyfully. "Manuel, Don Sebastian seems to be in good humour now," she said.

"What did you say to him about the matter?"

"I only said that it would be better for him to leave the governorship, because trouble was sure to come from the discovery, and seizing of the actors in the work of the other night."

"You did not tell him, mother, that he was pointed out as a participant?"

"Why should I tell him that? He would have danced with rage; I did not dare."

"But what did he reply at last?"

"'I know what I shall do,' he said; so go now and see him, my son."

Manuel kissed his mother's brow and went to the room of Sebastian Pancorbo, Governor of Killac.

CHAPTER XXII

Don Sebastian was reclining in an arm chair wrapped in a plush 'poncho,' his head tied up, with a red handkerchief, with the knot and ends in front. He was visibly preoccupied.

"Good morning, sir!" said Manuel on entering.

"Good morning! Where do you come from, Manuel? Really, from the time you came I have not seen you more than three times," said Don Sebastian, striving to hide his preoccupation.

"The fault is not mine, señor; you have not been at home."

"Really, these friends; the duties which I have to perform;—one does not belong to himself," said the Governor, and, as if seeking some way of making his conduct appear sincere, added: "The fact is the other night, really, I was in danger, without power to restrain the disorder; but what can be done without an armed force? You acted very well, Manuel. Really, but this Don Fernando is to blame for it all."

"I have come to speak to you seriously, Don

Sebastian, about what occurred the other night. I cannot remain with my arms crossed when I know that you are accused."

"I!" exclaimed Don Sebastian, jumping up.

"Yes, señor, you."

"And who is it accuses me, who? Really, I would like to know him."

"Do not excite yourself, señor; be calm, and let us speak as between father and son. Here no one hears us," replied Manuel, biting his lips.

"And you, what do you say? Speak! Really, I like the idea!"

"From all the investigations I have made, the results are, that the priest Pascual, you, and Estéfano Benites have plotted and directed this thing against Don Fernando because of the return of money that was assessed and for burial fees."

Don Sebastian kept changing colour at each word Manuel spoke, until, at the last, entirely pallid, and a prey to a nervous trembling which he strove in vain to overcome, he said: "They say that? Really, then, we have been sold."

"It was not yourselves alone. Other individuals belonged to the conspiracy, and plots that are made among many and among the wine cups do not carry the seal of secrecy," replied Manuel calmly.

"It must be Escobedo. Really, this youth seemed to me a bad one."

"It has been someone, Don Sebastian, but

this is not the time for conjectures but to put yourself in safety."

"And what is your idea, my son?"

"That you should leave the governorship immediately."

"Oh no, not that, really, I cease to be an authority in the town where I was born? No, no, do not propose such a thing to me, Manuel."

"But you will have to do it, or they will take it from you, and I ask and advise to do it soon. You have been carried along by the current. The principal author is the priest. I will have an understanding with him. You will sign your resignation, Don Sebastian. From childhood I have given you the name of father; everyone believes me to be your son, and you cannot doubt my interest nor despise my advice. I do it all from love to my mother, from gratitude to you," said Manuel exhausting his arsenal of provision and wiping his brow moistened with the dew of a discussion in which he had to mention his paternity unknown to society.

Don Sebastian was moved; he embraced Manuel saying to him: "Do as you please, really."

"Everything will be arranged in the best way possible for you, señor; and later we will go to see Don Fernando together, because it is better that you and he should be on good terms. Now I am going to see the priest Pascual."

When alone Don Sebastian repeated between his teeth: "Escobedo or Benites!"

At that time Father Pascual was calmly taking his lunch, with his two cats,—one black, the other white and yellow,—at his side; a woolly dog slept with his head between his fore paws, stretched full length on the threshold of the room; the "pongo" with folded arms, in a humble attitude, stood near the dog awaiting his master's orders.

Hearing footsteps and seeing Manuel coming, the priest took up a soup plate and covered with it another plate on which was a young pigeon prepared after the native fashion, with two sliced tomatoes upon the wings and a sprig of parsley in its beak.

"Reverend Father," said Manuel on entering, raising his hat politely.

"Manuel, to what happy chance do I owe the pleasure of seeing you here?" was the greeting of the priest.

"The reason of my coming cannot be unknown to you, señor," replied Manuel dryly. He had gone prepared to use no compliments with the priest Pascual.

"Young man, you surprise me," said Pascual, changing his tone; and taking up a fork absently from the table, he seemed absorbed in contemplating it.

Manuel, who had remained standing, took the seat nearest to him and continued: "Without preamble, señor priest, the assault which the night before last covered the town with shame and mourning is your work."

"What do you say? Insolent boy!" said

the priest, moving about in his seat, surprised at hearing for the first time such language as from an equal and in an accusing tone.

"I do not qualify my words, señor priest; remember that it is not the robe that gives respect to a man, but the man who dignifies the habit which covers good as well as unworthy ministers," replied Manuel.

"And what proof have you of the truth of such an accusation?"

"All that a man needs to accuse another man," replied the young man plainly.

"And if instead of me you should meet another person before whom you would have to hang down your head ashamed?" asked the priest, throwing the fork, which he had retained in his hand, upon the table, thinking he had given a decisive blow. But Manuel, without losing his serenity in the least, responded very quietly: "The person to whom you allude, señor, has been your unhappy tool, as the others have been."

"What do you say, young man?" exclaimed the priest, angrily, into whose mind came the thought "Can Pancorbo have revealed anything?"

"What you have heard, señor Pascual;" replied Manuel, "let us make our conversation short."

"The shortest way will be for you to take your leave," replied the priest furiously.

"Before I have accomplished my purpose? Do not expect it, señor."

"And what is it you desire?" inquired the priest, changing his tone and striving to keep his anger.

"I desire that you and Don Sebastian should repair the damage you have done, as much as possible, before the judge requires it of the delinquents."

"Holy heavens! What do I hear? Don Sebastian, weak and effeminate, has sold us!" exclaimed the priest, wholly conquered by Manuel when he mentioned his father. But like a man seeking a new line of defence he continued: "Would you be such an unnatural son as to accuse your father?".

"Of course not, since I am seeking a reparation, prudent and deliberate, to minimise the fault which by some means must be found, since our religious beliefs teach us that without previous remission of sin we shall not find the door of heaven open."

"Aha! And is that what your professors have taught you, so you may avoid accusing your father?" inquired the priest ironically.

"More still, señor priest. They have taught me that without rectitude of action there can be neither citizen, nor country, nor family; and I repeat that I do not accuse Don Sebastian; I seek satisfaction to minimise his wrong doing," continued the young man, when suddenly there appeared at the door a servant from the house of Don Fernando, screaming frantically:

"Señor, señor, help for a dying person!!"

"Go, señor priest. Fulfil the duties of your

office and afterwards we will talk," said Manuel taking leave.

The priest took up his hat, and, looking after Manuel, said contemptuously, "Bah! What a mason!" (*i.e.* opponent to Romanism, rank heretic.)

Uncovering the plate he had put by, and smelling the contents, he murmured in an undertone: "The pigeon is cold; I will eat it on my return."

CHAPTER XXIII

Señor and Señora Marin omitted neither expense nor careful attention in their efforts to save the sick woman, but, unfortunately, she continued to grow worse, and the end was approaching.

Lucia and her husband were conversing together quietly: "How mysterious these things are, Fernando. Marcela came to our tranquil happy home seeking relief, which she found in the name of charity; we took pleasure in doing good, and, from those actions,—good, elevated and holy,—resulted misfortune for all."

"Remember, my dear, that our work in life is to fight, and that the sepulchre of good is dug by ignorance. The triumph consists in not allowing ourselves to be interred."

Margarita appeared at the door like a meteor crying: "Señora, señora, my mother calls you!"

"I am coming," answered Lucia, leaving the room immediately.

She found Marcela in a half sitting position, propped up by pillows.

On seeing Lucia, Marcela's eyes filled with tears, and in a broken, trembling voice, she exclaimed: "Señora Lucia, I am dying! Alas! my daughters . . . Doves without a nest . . . . without a tree to shelter them . . . . without a mother. Alas, alas."

"Poor Marcela, you are weak; do not agitate yourself; I will not preach to you, to try to prove or explain the mysteries of God, but, you are good, you are a Christian," said Lucia, arranging the covers of the bed, slightly disordered.

"Yes, señora."

"If your hour has come, Marcela, go calmly! Your daughters are not birds without a nest; this is their home, and I will be their mother."

"May God repay you . . . . I wish to reveal . . . . to you . . . . a secret . . . . to be lost in your heart . . . . until the needful hour," gasped the sick woman, making a great effort to speak.

"What is it?" asked Lucia coming closer.

Marcela, putting her icy lips to the ear of Lucia, murmured some phrases which caused the latter to start and look at the sick woman in wonder.

"Will you promise, señora?"

"Yes, I swear to you by Christ our Lord who died on the cross," responded Lucia, greatly moved.

And the poor martyr, whose last hour was approaching, added with a deep sigh which seemed to be her final farewell to the things of

earth, "May God repay you! Now I wish to confess; death is awaiting me."

The arrival of Don Pascual was announced. Lucia, leading Margarita by the hand, returned his salute very coldly.

The priest approached the bed to listen to the sacramental confidences of his victim!

Margarita could not deceive herself any longer; her eyes were red with weeping. She would weep still more when she should see her mother carried out by strangers to be laid for ever in the damp ground of the cemetery. Poor Margarita! Nevertheless, in her grief, she did not measure the magnitude of her misfortune. Lucia took the girls away and left them with a servant to put on the new dresses that had been made for them, saying to herself as she left: "The adorable simplicity of children. Ah! Childhood is gilded by the warmth of the refulgent sun of faith, while old age is frozen by the coldness of scepticism, knowing mankind as it is."

She found Don Fernando in his office. Almost at the same moment Manuel and Don Sebastian arrived. When Lucia saw them she said to herself wonderingly: "What is going to happen to-day in this house, where in these few days have taken place such tragic events, the extent of which it is impossible to measure. What new drama is going to unfold itself in my home where an invisible hand has brought together now the principal actors, persecutors and persecuted; guilty and innocent; in the

presence of a mother who finds herself on the borders of a sepulchre opened for her by these notables,—representatives of the church and of the authority."

"I salute you, Señora Lucia," said Manuel, meeting her at the door of the study, which they entered, followed by Don Sebastian.

"Gentlemen," said Lucia, with manifest displeasure at the sight of Don Sebastian who, taking off his hat, said: "Good afternoon, madam."

"How do you do, Manuel; good afternoon, Don Sebastian!" said Don Fernando, repressing the strong feeling which the presence of the latter roused within him.

But Manuel, having anticipated that feeling, in order to relieve the difficult situation, was the first to commence the conversation, saying: "Señora Fernando, we have come to consult with you as to the manner in which you may receive the most explicit satisfaction from people who have offended you with the same ignorance with which a mad dog offends."

"To satisfy me is not a difficult thing, Don Manuel. I have studied more or less the character of this people, which is unfolding without the stimulus of good example, or of healthy advice; and which, at the cost of their own dignity, will still continue to preserve what they call their legendary customs."

"But how will they repair the damage inflicted on so many victims?" replied Señor Marin, giving to his words the severe accentuation of truth and reproach.

"And, really," Don Sebastian dared to inquire with trembling voice, "how many deaths have there been?"

"What! Do you not know, Don Sebastian; and you, a local authority. A very strange thing!" was all the reply that Don Fernando made as he went over to his wife.

"This seeming strangeness will be explained, Don Fernando, when it is known that my father has not gone out of his house since those terrible events which I had the good fortune to restrain; the lieutenant governor having taken charge of the post as the law provides."

"This precautionary and well meditated action does not save him from responsibility," observed Lucia with her natural feminine vivacity.

Manuel replied readily: "Señora, I, who have arrived at such a tragical time for Killac, for this my native town, could not remain indifferent. I must look for reparation; must seek to prevent new evils; therefore I have persuaded my father to resign the post he did not know how to sustain. I am going to try to repair some of the evil done."

"Are you going to enter into combat with vices which enjoy the privilege of being well rooted; with errors which increase and become fruitful under the protecting tree of custom, without some good examples, some stimulus to awaken souls from the debility in which abuse has sunk them; the desire for immoderate gain and the ignorance preserved by speculation?

It seems to me a difficult thing, Manuel," said Señor Marin.

Manuel was neither defeated nor convinced, and replied: "That is precisely the conflict of the Peruvian youth exiled in these retired regions; I have the hope, Señor Marin, that the civilisation which they seek, waving the banner of a pure Christianity, will not be long in manifesting itself, constituting the felicity of the family and, as a logical consequence, the felicity of society."

"And your strength will be sufficient, think you, Manuel? Can you count on other support than that which your noble mother offers, and we as friends can give?" asked Don Fernando.

Lucia crossed her arms as if tired and Don Sebastian remained firm as a post, planted under his historic cape.

"It is my belief that these people have not yet touched the deepest depths of abjection; the masses are docile. The very event which we lament has proved it to me," replied Manuel.

"I do not contradict you, Manuel; but. . ."

"Error also has a remedy, really," ventured Don Sebastian.

"That is true, when that error has not crossed the threshold of eternity; Don Sebastian, we have several wounded, four dead, and the unfortunate Marcela ready to expire, leaving her daughters, to sum up, orphans, widows."

"In what manner will you rectify these errors?" interposed Lucia.

Don Sebastian covered his face with both hands, like a condemned child, Manuel turned pale, wiping the profuse perspiration that bathed his brow, and the despairing cry of Margarita reached them all.

"Mercy! Mother! Help!"

"Let us go!" exclaimed Lucia, rushing from the room.

All hurried to the bedside of the martyr wife, whose life went out in a sigh. One tear shone upon her face, the last tear with which she said farewell to this valley of tears.

Marcela had flown to the serene regions of imperishable peace leaving her mortal vesture behind to speak for her.

And Don Sebastian, and the priest Pascual, the two men responsible for the sad event, stood in the presence of the spoils of death.

CHAPTER XXIV

Tales and comments ran from mouth to mouth; some nearly exact, others greatly exaggerated. The Indians, ashamed of the docility with which they had responded to the alarm of the bells and had been deceitfully persuaded to attack the peaceful home of Don Fernando, wandered about the outskirts of the place moody and frightened.

Estêfano Benites gathered together his companions in the office of his house where we saw them before playing cards; seeing that his accomplices were vacillating, he said to encourage them. "Comrades, we must stand together!"

"I did not think the shot would go so far from the mark," said Escobedo.

"If the authorities come, you know what to do," instructed Estéfano.

"And if they make us declare, upon oath?" inquired Escobedo.

"We do not know anything. Comrades, remember, when the thing commences, it is not for nothing that I am secretary to the judge."

"Let us accuse the dead Indians," remarked one.

"We will put it upon the sexton; that Indian has cattle and can defend himself," was the advice of another.

"Man, did you speak to Champi that night?" asked Escobedo of the one who had spoken first.

"No, not I, it was Benites."

"Yes, I spoke with him," affirmed Estéfano.

"And how was it? I was thinking about calling Champi because he is a friend of mine and because I have pending a matter of grinding some wheat," said Escobedo interestedly.

"Well, what I said to him was this: 'Santiago, keep yourself ready, for from certain papers I know that a band of highwaymen have arrived on the outskirts of the town, robbing churches, and, as the service of the church is valuable, it must be guarded."

"Very good! Isidro thinks a great deal of me; is capable of following me to Purgatory, if need be," maintained Escobedo laughing.

"Do not forget to find out what is going on. I am going to Don Sebastian to take notes," said Benites, taking leave of his comrades, and each one went to their gossiping seat, as they called the corner of the plaza, a name which they themselves had given in a moment of inspiration.

The assault had taken place, just as had been arranged in the parochial house, but without

the results aimed at by these blind followers of their vicious customs.

When the people were collected together the house of Don Fernando was indicated to them as the refuge of the supposed highwaymen, and the moments of excitement of a mob are never those of reflection,—they believed and attacked. That was how the tragedy came about.

Afterwards, the valiant words of a young man almost unknown to the people, followed by so respectable and beloved a lady as Doña Petronila, imposed the truce which was followed by a calm ; and now, with that rapid change of popular sentiment, came the repentance,—the horror,—of what had already been done, which with the first rays of the morning light, they contemplated as a most iniquitous farce.

The judicial authority appeared on the scene of disorder, and two wise men, appointed on the spot, gave in their report, in terms as technical as obscure, as to the investigation of the truth.

CHAPTER XXV

On the entrance of Don Fernando, Lucia, Don Sebastian and Manuel, to the room of Marcela, who had just expired, the body still warm lay on a light iron bed.

Kneeling by the side of the bed with his face hidden in his hands, was the priest Pascual.

Margarita, almost totally transformed, her hair loose, her eyes bathed in tears that sprang from her heart, clasped one of the hands of her dead mother. Lucia took a white handkerchief and covered the face of the one who had been Marcela, the Indian woman, with the respect which was inspired by that martyr of mother love, of gratitude and of faith.

Lucia's mind was filled with the revelation which Marcela had confided to her in her last moments.

Don Fernando and Don Sebastian remained in the middle of the room, and Manuel, gazing at Margarita, felt all the blood of his veins rushing to his heart.

Was it that he became acquainted with Margarita in such a solemn situation, and when his soul was predisposed by the rush of so many

and varied sensations, that he became influenced imperceptibly by the purest and grandest of passions? Was it the confusion of sentiment and feelings, or the notable beauty of Margarita that conquered the heart of the young student? We do not know, but Cupid had shot his dart through the heart of Margarita and that of Manuel; and by the side of that death-bed was born the love that was to conduct the young man to the threshold of happiness:

In the death chamber, conversation is never very animated,—phrases uttered in an undertone, quiet steps, whisperings as if still they were watching by a sick bed; such is the picture where everything imitates the silence of the sepulchre.

This time it was Don Pascual who, rousing from his abstraction, with a wandering glance but clear voice, said: "Praise be to God who, giving to-day glory to a saint in heaven, redeems a sinner here on earth. My children! My children! Pardon! For I promise in this august temple,—here before the relics of a martyr,—that for this sinner shall commence a new era."

Everyone remained stupefied and looked at father Pascual, wondering if he were crazy. But he, without taking notice, continued: "You cannot believe that in me should have died the good seeds which the words of a Christian mother deposit in the heart of man. Unhappy is the man who is thrown into the desert of the priesthood without the protection of a family! Pardon! Pardon!"

He fell again upon his knees, clasping his hands in attitude of supplication.

"His mind is wandering," said one. "He has become insane," observed others.

Don Fernando, stepping forward, took the priest by the arm, raised him up and conducted him to his office to offer him a place of rest.

Lucia, turning to those present, and pointing to the lifeless form, said: "Let us go, leaving in peace the remains of one who is no more."

Manuel, taking Margarita by the arm, replied in a tender tone: "Señora, if Marcela has gone away to heaven causing tears to flow here, this child comes from there inspiring hope."

"Well said, Manuel. Margarita, if I could not make your mother's days pleasant, I will crown with happiness the years of your life; you shall be my daughter," said Lucia, turning to the orphan.

These words fell like refreshing rain upon the heart of the young man who, looking at Margarita, said to himself: "How beautiful! She is an angel? I also will work for her!"

"Come, let us go," repeated Lucia, taking the arm of Don Sebastian who seemed to have become a statue of salt,—"We have to fulfil the last duties for her who was Marcela," and she went out with Don Sebastian, leaving Manuel to follow with Margarita who, by a mysterious combination of circumstances, left the death chamber of her mother conducted by the man whom she was to love so much.

CHAPTER XXVI

Positive is the sympathetic influence which can be exercised upon his fellow beings by a man who, recognizing that he is working in a wrong path, turns and retraces his steps, asking the protection of the good.

For, heartless and selfish as may be the present century, it is false that the act of repentance does not inspire interest and merit respect.

The words of Father Pascual would have moved the noble sentiments of Don Fernando Marin to such a degree that he might be entirely disposed to support, or rather defend the priest from the complications which might come upon him in the course of events, initiated by the intervention of the judge;—but Señor Marin was a man of the world, acquainted with the human heart, and the attitude of Señor Pascual wore, for him, a different aspect than it would to ordinary people, and he said to himself: "This is the explosion of fright; the nervous shaking up produced by fear; I cannot have faith in the words of this man."

Meanwhile the priest, as if divining by in-

tuition the thoughts of Señor Marin, said to him: "I will not restrain myself, Don Fernando. Resolutions accompanied by vacillations come to nought. I have been more unfortunate than criminal. They are deceivers, those who setting up an illusive theory, seek the virtue of the priesthood away from the family,—thrown into the midst of their flocks when practice and experience, like the two hands of the dial which should indicate infallibly the hour, show us that it is impossible to obtain anything but the degeneration of man's nature."

"You might have been a model priest, Don Pascual."

"Yes, in the bosom of a family, Don Fernando,—but to-day can I say it before you?—set apart in the priesthood, I am a bad father of children who cannot recognize me, the baneful recollection of women who never have loved me; a sad example for my parishioners! Alas! Alas!"

The voice of the man became choked; great drops of perspiration stood on his brow, and his glance inspired fear rather than respect.

"Calm yourself, Father Pascual! Why such excitement?" said Don Fernando with a gesture of compassion, while his countenance revealed his surprise, for the person before him was not the Father Pascual whom he had seen and talked with many times;—it was the lion awakened from lethargy by the pain of a mortal wound, tearing himself in pieces.

"The revelation of Marcela!" exclaimed the

priest, covering his face with his hands, then taking them away to raise them towards heaven as if overcome with terror.

Those words of sacramental revelation, were they of supreme importance? It would appear so.

Whatever they were they fell upon a spirit already prepared by the terror which filled him at the result of the assault, and the undue excitement of the brain produced by the liquor and illicit pleasures; added to these the words that Manuel hurled at him as a terrible reproach; all these must produce a terrible effect.

In such situations, a man goes to one or the other extreme of social life,—virtue or crime.

But the entire organism of the priest was completely worn out and the reaction for good could not be expected to endure. That was the delirium-tremens that attacks the brain, showing him phantoms that speak and threaten. His lips were dry, his respiration fast; but he continued his discourses interrupted by an internal conflict.

"I am resolved, Don Fernando."

The priest fell to the floor senseless. They raised him up, already stricken with typhoid fever. It was necessary to send him to his home, lonely and desolate, without the affection and assistance of loving friends.

For the unhappy man there were no attendants except his "pongo" and "mitayas," and no love except from his dog.

CHAPTER XXVII

The high mountain tops that surround Killac were covered with that pale light which the king of day sometimes leaves behind him as he sinks in the west, and which the country people call the "sun of the gentiles."

The evening was tranquil; the tired husbandman was wending his way wearily homeward; the birds with drooping wing sought their sheltering tree, and the grasshoppers, flitting about, announced the coming of night with the monotonous zum, zum, peculiar to them.

Lucia and Manuel, in the presence of Don Sebastian, were occupied in making the last arrangements for the interment of Marcela when Don Fernando entered.

"Fernando, what strange things are happening! Is poor Pascual still repentant?" asked Lucia.

"My dear, Father Pascual appears to be dying of fever, and in his delirium says things that make the soul shudder," replied her husband, passing his hand across his brow.

On hearing this, Don Sebastian jumped as if bitten by a viper, screaming: "May God

protect and favour me! There is nothing now wanting but for the judges to come. Really, this is horrible! Horrible!" he repeated beating his brow with the palms of his hands.

"Calm yourself, Don Sebastian. Do not make yourself ill!" said Don Fernando.

At that moment was heard the bell of the temple tolling for a death, and asking prayers for the soul of Marcela, wife of Juan Yupanqui.

Lucia, who was standing near Margarita, folded her to her heart saying: "Let us find your little sister Rosalia; it is some time since we saw her," then, turning to her husband, added: "Fernando; you finish here while I go to prepare a resting place for these two birds without a nest."

"Margarita, Margarita," murmured Manuel in the ear of the girl, "Lucia is your mother, I will be your brother." And a tear rolled down the cheek of the young man, like the precious pearl with which his heart repaid Lucia for the love and kindness shown to the poor orphan, whose altar of adoration was already raised in his soul with the white lilies of first love. To love is to live!

PART II

CHAPTER I

The heart of man is like a cloudy sky,—alike in its tempests and in its serene calmness. How numerous are the phases through which it passes!

After the night of storm comes the clear sunlit day.

After the sad events which we have narrated in the first part of this history, the inhabitants of the little town of Killac entered into a period of calm similar to the languor that succeeds a period of immoderate work.

Months passed, and at last the case was called through, by which they pretended to wish to discover the guilty parties in the assault of the fifth of August.

The preliminary inquiries, with their legal technicalities, had not been sufficient to lay bare the truth, and they really have discovered nothing of what we already know;—the case having been followed up with the slowness and carelessness characteristic of Perú, where crime

is left unpunished and ofttimes innocence is threatened.

Notwithstanding, the pile of documents increased in dimensions daily, and further affirmations were added in which were noted the lengthy statements of witnesses who, even in giving their age, state, religion, etc., failed to speak the truth.

Señor Marin was summoned to the court to make a declaration and, notwithstanding his lack of interest in the case, he obeyed the summons and appeared before the Justice of the Peace, commissioned by the Recorder to prepare the "sumario."

The Judge, Don Hilarion Verdejo, a man well advanced in years, thrice a widower, and the present proprietor of "Manzanares," bought from the estate of the Bishop, Don Pedro Miranda y Claro, was gravely seated in his sanctum, before a pine table, in an easy chair of the kind manufactured some forty years ago, in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and now quite a rarity in the cities of Perú.

Two gentlemen accompanied Verdejo, who were to serve as witnesses to the "declaration." In the meantime Señor Fernando Marin, having arrived on the scene, was cordially welcomed by the Judge, who, extending his hand, said: "You will pardon me, Don Fernando, for having troubled you to appear; I would have called on you, but . . . . in these times . . . . there is really so much to do . . . . I really . . . ."

"Away with excuses, Judge, you are quite in order," replied Señor Marin; and Don Hilarion, without further parley, commenced the reading of documents which at once convinced Don Fernando of the absurdity on his part of continuing the case, in itself worthy of being treated by people of more thought and discretion as well as justice.

"Shall we get down to facts, Judge?" asked Don Fernando.

"Wait a little, my friend;—my secretary will not delay long," replied Verdejo, somewhat disturbed, and adjusting his hat on a corner of the table, meanwhile directing furtive glances towards the door, through which at last appeared Estéfano Benites, carrying a quill over his right ear.

After a hasty greeting, drawing up his chair, he said: "I have been somewhat delayed, sir; kindly excuse me," and mechanically taking his pen, he placed himself in his accustomed attitude, ready to write at the dictation of Don Hilarion, who said: "Put down your heading Don Estéfano, in a good hand, as it is a matter belonging to our friend Señor Marin."

Benites, after writing a few lines, replied: "It is down, sir."

Don Hilarion here coughed to clear his throat, and in solemn tones, or, rather, like a scholar repeating his lesson from memory,—commenced as follows: "Interrogated as to whether he knows, and is able to state that there have been disorders and riots with fire-

arms, in this town, on the night of the fifth of August,—responded:

"Yes, he knows, and is able to state the same, as his house was actually assaulted," Don Fernando hastened to reply, desirous of sparing the Judge difficulties in the editing of the report.

"With this declaration you completely annihilate your enemies, friend Marin," said Don Hilarion with a parenthesis in his dictation.

Don Fernando limited himself to silence whilst the Judge continued: "Interrogated as to whether he knows who attacked the house, or who were perpetrators of the assault . . . ."

"Yes!" said Don Fernando with firmness.

At such a reply Estéfano raised his countenance shewing thereon the undisguised astonishment, consequent on such an unexpected blow, and looking clearly at Señor Marin,—although he failed to discover anything by which he might suspect that his participation in the affair was known to Señor Marin.

From that moment his handwriting changed in a marked degree, and showed plainly that he was under strong excitement. The witnesses exchanged significant glances which the Judge did not fail to observe.

"That being so we shall catch the criminals," and thinking he had done sufficient work, the judge added: "That will do for to-day. Don Fernando; to-morrow we will continue, all being well,—for I have an appointment. Alas! What a busy life is that of a Judge."

"Just as you please, Judge; there is nothing urgent on my part," responded Señor Marin, taking up his hat and bowing himself out. As he was leaving Estéfano accosted him with an air of mystery, saying in an undertone: "Señor Marin, excuse me; but who will pay my fee as Secretary?"

"I do not know, my young friend," answered Don Fernando, with a shake of the head, and forthwith retreating.

As soon as they were alone, Verdejo observed, addressing his Secretary: "So he said he knew them, eh?"

"Yes, Don Hilarion," replied Benites, cleaning his pen with a bit of paper.

"And, now that I remember,—so that all may be in perfect order,—we must immediately decree the "embargo" on the stock of the sexton Champi, for up to the present he is the only one compromised in this affair," following out his preconceived plan.

"Aha! I was forgetting. Make out the decree, and strong too!"

Thus authorised, Benites at once drew up a species of order of sale on the cattle, sheep and alpacas of Isidro Champi, sexton of Killac, to whom that stock represented untold sacrifices, made by him and his family during all their life-time.

After writing, Estéfano consulted the Judge saying, "The Depository exacted by the law can be our friend Escobedo; he is a person of good standing, honourable, and altogether with us, Judge."

"Escobedo?" repeated Don Hilarion scratching his ear,—and after a slight pause, said: "Yes, that will do,—put down Escobedo."

Having arranged the scattered documents upon the table, Señor Verdejo took his hat to leave, his day's work being finished.

CHAPTER II

The situation of Manuel was becoming very complicated. Shut up in his room for long hours, he often said to himself in his frequent soliloquies: "Although Don Sebastian's name has not yet appeared in the ordinance, it is in everyone's mouth; indicated for accusation and proof. The explanation which would be given of my conduct by outsiders who should see me frequent the house of Don Fernando, could not be satisfactory at this time, and the comments that would be made, not honourable to me. I must be strong; I will make the sacrifice that I may one day be worthy of her. I will not visit the house; but what sad moments this keeping away imposes upon me,—when my heart belongs to Margarita and my ardent desire is to participate in the plans that the Señora Lucia projects for the education of the orphans. Sorrow of the soul! Thou art called Fate and I am thy son!"

So saying, he buried his face in his hands, seeming like one who sinks himself in a shoreless sea of doubt and meditation. He remained

thus for a long time, then arose quietly with the air of one who had come to a decision.

Manuel evidently had a plan formed in his brain, dictated, without doubt, by his heart,—and soon began to prepare the ground for the realisation of his ideas.

One day, after hesitating a long time,—sentiment conquered his will, and he said: "It is time to leave all comment on one side. To-night I go."

For the first time since his arrival in Killac, Manuel devoted a great deal of time and care to his toilette. The gloves kept for his examinations at the University were taken from the depths of his trunk, and every portion of his dress arranged with scrupulous care. Then he went to the garden to pass away the time. Thoughts of Margarita, mingled with the brightness and perfume of the flowers. With his whole being absorbed in illusive dreams he gathered a bunch of violets and hid it carefully in the inner pocket of his coat, saying to himself: "The violets are flowers that represent modesty, and that is a virtue which enhances the loveliness of a beautiful woman.

"Violets for my Margarita! When at my age they gather them in the midst of the rays of light that illumine the enamoured heart, involuntarily they leave a piece of the soul in each flower, so that all united together, it may fly to join the soul of the loved being. The age of twenty—they say—is the poetry of existence; the flowers are its rhymes; love its

own life. Oh! I feel, I know that since I have loved I live."

At last the long desired hour arrived, and Manuel set out on his way through the deserted streets of Killac, the uneven pavements of which he covered with gigantic strides, arriving at the house of Don Fernando with his heart palpitating with emotions that for him breathed of nectar and ambrosia.

On entering the reception room he found Lucia putting in the last stitches to a watch pocket of blue satin on which she had embroidered with shaded silks a forget-me-not with her husband's initials on the other side. Seated near her was Margarita, more beautiful than ever, her hair loose, confined only in front by a ribbon. She was engaged in putting away in a paste-board box the pieces of a dissected alphabet, of which she already knew the different letters.

Rosalia, playing with another little girl of her own age, was laughing merrily at a rag doll, the face of which she had just washed with some tea which had been left in a cup.

Manuel remained a moment contemplating that beautiful family picture, where Margarita represented to his heart the angel of felicity.

Lucia turned her head, expecting to see Don Fernando, but, on seeing Manuel, said in surprise: "Oh! Is it you, Manuel?"

"Good evening, Señora Lucia! I have surprised you!"

"If I was surprised it was because you have

been lost for so many days," she replied responding to his salutation and inviting him to be seated.

"All the more reason why you should have lived in my memory and heart," replied the youth, and as he spoke he looked towards Margarita, whom he greeted by saying: "And how is the happy god-child?"

"Very well, Manuel. I know all the letters now."

"Very good. Let me examine you," and taking up the box he began to shew her the letters.

"A, Y, D, M," said the girl quickly.

"Now you must combine them. I will be your teacher," proposed Manuel. Taking six letters, then nine and arranging them in order said: "Look!" and he made her spell.

"M-a-r-g-a-r-i-t-a!" "M-a-n-u-e-l!"

Lucia understood the intention of Manuel and said smilingly: "Good teacher! He does not forget his own interests; wishes to engrave his name in the memory of his pupils."

"My audacity goes still further, Señora. I would like to engrave it in the heart also," said Manuel laughing.

Margarita did not take her eyes from the letters.

Manuel, quite impressed by the turn matters were taking, to conceal his emotion, asked carelessly: "Señora, is Don Fernando at home?"

"Yes, he is. When you entered I thought it was he. He will be in soon now. But, to

return to the other subject, why have you kept away from us for so long?" asked Lucia.

"Señora, I do not wish to offend you by painful explanations. I have thought it prudent to do so while these judicial proceedings were going on."

"You are very thoughtful, Manuel; but we who know all about it. . . That you saved us."

"Not for you, but for others," Manuel hastened to say, noticing the interest with which Margarita listened to the words of her god-mother.

At this moment Don Fernando entered saluting Manuel cordially.

CHAPTER III

Father Pascual was almost miraculously saved from the attack of typhoid fever which kept him prostrated some days, in the bed of pain, cared for by charity. His convalescence was slow, notwithstanding the mildness of the climate and the abundance of milk and other nutritious food.

The condition of his brain called for a change of scene, of objects and customs, in order to be dispossessed of all those terrible images which filled him with terror and remorse.

He resolved to go to the city to consult a doctor and seek comfort, leaving his parish temporarily in the charge of a Franciscan friar who arrived at Killac about the same time as the new authority named by the supreme government to rule the province entered into his duties.

Well chosen was the Colonel Bruno Paredes, a man well known in all parts of Perú. He enjoyed great fame for his ability to sustain his part well at banquets, as well as to keep his coffers well filled by the fruits of his office. Paredes was also an old comrade of Don

Sebastian, companion-in-arms in some old revolution years before.

Don Bruno was nearly sixty years of age, well preserved; his personal appearance somewhat improved by a certain kind of hair dressing and by the good offices of a dentist in Lima. Tall and stout, with coarse features and colour more than modest. When he laughed boisterously the dentist's work was plainly visible. His thick lips were well protected by a heavy beard. He wore the uniform of a Colonel although he had never troubled himself with any kind of military studies, but circumstances gave him the opportunity to put on the straps, and his candour was not sufficiently strong to enable him to despise them. His education and manner of speaking were of the worst kind.

On arriving at Killac he immediately sought out his old comrade, Don Sebastian. Knowing all that had occurred in the place, he began with all his customary frankness. "How is it, Don Sebastian, that you, a man of weight and authority, have allowed yourself to be led by a school-boy like Manuel; that is the last thing that should happen."

"Colonel, really, I declare to you that I could not do any other way. That boy has talked me completely over, and Petronila has clinched the nail with her tears."

"What a pretty state of affairs! You permit yourself to be led by the tears of a woman, and we will see how the country will go on. No,

señor. You stand upon your own feet and I will support you, yes, señor."

"But my resignation is already in the office of the Prefect, really, Colonel."

"You talk like a child, Don Sebastian. Where is your courage of former times?"

"But how shall we arrange matters, really this is serious," said Don Sebastian joyfully.

"We will arrange it in two minutes; yes, señor; you can withdraw your resignation or not, and I will name you Governor again; yes, señor," said the colonel putting both hands in his pockets and marching up and down the room.

"Really, Colonel," observed Don Sebastian, passing his hand through his hair as if seeking ideas. "Easter is near, and we can send a yearling to the Prefect; but, really, Colonel, what about Manuel?"

"Oh, laugh at Manuel! You need not tell him anything about it. And, making use of our former frankness, I am going to tell you clearly that I need you, Don Sebastian. I need your support, I have come counting on you. This Sub-Prefecture must get me out of certain tight places, yes, señor. You know a man has to spend something, and for five years I have been trying to obtain this place, as you know, and my plans are well thought out."

"Ah, that gives another aspect to the matter," replied Don Sebastian.

"And did you think me an idiot? When one hires a milch cow, she is returned quite dry.

My efforts have not been slight to obtain this post."

"That is very true, Colonel. But what about the judgment in that matter of the attack?"

"About the judgment? Ha! ha! ha! How plainly it is to be seen that you are a novice in these things. Afraid of the judgment! Let your great, great grandchildren say that it is null and void, and let us not think any more about it. And how is our priest Pascual?"

"Our priest has gone to the city. Really, he nearly died."

"I am sorry, because the priest would have been of great assistance in the carrying out of our projects. We have to gather up a good number of dollars this year," said Don Bruno, taking his hands out of his pockets.

"Of course, Colonel; really, Father Pascual suited us, so good, so condescending as he was."

"And continues to be as loving as ever?"

"That, Colonel, is a habit he will have down to the grave, and, really, one is a man. . ."

"Yes, señor, one is a man. And Estéfano Benites and other friends here?" inquired Don Bruno with interest.

"All well, Colonel, and really Benites pleases me very much."

"Well, summon them, Don Sebastian. I wish to leave all our plans of administration definitely arranged, so that I may go on my way, for I must not delay taking the oath of office."

"This instant, Colonel; although, really, they will not delay in coming to congratulate you; they already know of your arrival in town," replied Don Sebastian, feeling entirely reanimated.

All the scruples which the words of Manuel had raised in his soul had disappeared under the influence of the words of Colonel Paredes, with the same rapidity with which the clouds of sunset fade.

CHAPTER IV

Don Fernando related to Manuel what had occurred at the Courthouse, adding: "And does not all this give you a sad idea of what these authorities are, Manuel?"

"Don Fernando, my soul is wounded to the quick, and every new detail is like putting a finger into the sore. Ah! If I could only take my mother away!" said the young man earnestly.

"For this, Manuel, we have resolved to send the children somewhere else to be educated," said Lucia.

"And what place have you selected," he asked quickly.

"Lima, of course," replied Don Fernando.

"Oh, yes, Lima! There they educate the heart and instruct the intelligence. And then, I believe that in a few years Margarita will find a good husband. With that face and those eyes she will not remain long single," said Lucia laughing happily.

But Manuel, turning pale, inquired, "Have you decided yet on the date of departure?"

"We have not settled the exact date, but it will be this year," replied Don Fernando.

"Going to Lima is like reaching the antechamber of Heaven, and viewing the throne of Glory and Fortune. They say that our beautiful capital is like the city of the gods," said Manuel, trying to hide his emotion and resolving in his own mind to follow Margarita to Lima as soon as possible.

Lucia went over to speak apart with her husband, and Manuel, took this time to give his bouquet of violets to Margarita, saying in a low tone: "Margarita, these flowers are like you; I hope to find you always as modest as they. Keep them."

Margarita, taking the flowers, hid them in her dress, while the tears came to her eyes. Tears of happiness! Tears which announce to the heart the hour of sentiment; the rain that bedews the flower of hope. The heart of woman is the heart of a child from birth to death, unless frozen by the terrible tempests of unbelief or depravity.

Lucia, changing the theme of conversation, said to her husband: "Do you know, Fernando, that Manuel has a thousand scruples about continuing to visit us?"

"For us, my dear, there is no reason why he should have any scruples, but for others, he is right; nevertheless," he added, turning to Manuel, "you could come in the evening."

"Many thanks, Señor Marin."

"And they tell me that the new authority has arrived. Do you know, Manuel, where he is staying?"

"Yes, señor, he was at our house to-day, but continued his journey immediately. I saw and saluted him in passing, but I think we do not sympathise with each other. He knew me as a child."

"I am sorry. A youth like yourself is worth more than twenty old men of that type. I do not wish to flatter you, but think the authority would gain by your friendship."

"Thanks for so much kindness, Don Fernando; but those who know us when children seldom wish to see us at any other time," replied Manuel, taking his hat to leave.

When the "Good-nights" were said, Margarita added: "You will come again, Manuel, will you not?"

The young man was soon traversing the gloomy streets of Killac, the silence of which would inspire fear in the hearts of any one who remembered the tragic scenes of the fifth of August and the picture of the death of Juan Yupanqui.

But Manuel was too much occupied with other thoughts to think of those things now. He walked on thinking aloud: "Yes, I will go to Lima! Within three years I shall be a lawyer, and Margarita a beautiful woman, good and noble. And then, will she return my love? or will she look upon me as the son of the man who caused the death of her parents? Thank God, for the first time in my life I feel satisfied with my true father. But why cannot I bear his name,—the name that all respect and love?

It is not the command of God; it is human aberration and weakness, a cruel law! Margarita mine! I will declare all to Don Fernando and then you shall be my wife. Love will stimulate my aspirations. I will be a lawyer as soon as possible. I shall go to the famous San Marcos University and study day and night. A person with will and determination can accomplish anything. She must love me; she accepted my violets and asked me to come again. If she were a woman I could reveal my thoughts to her. But Margarita is still a child, and that child has robbed me of my heart. Yes I will be worthy of the god-child of the good Señora Lucia!"

So thinking Manuel arrived at his home, where his mother awaited him.

CHAPTER V

As Don Sebastian expected, the neighbours, or a certain class of them, gathered together quickly as soon as the news of the arrival of the Sub-Prefect was spread over the town. The Sub-Prefect, Don Bruno Paredes, was seated in Don Sebastian's reception room, ready to receive them. The greetings were profuse and hearty.

"We are very glad to see you among us?" "Now we shall have good administration!" "All the prominent neighbours of the place congratulate you."

So ran the chorus of voices, to which the Colonel replied: "I come with the best intentions, with the firm purpose of supporting the people of the locality.

"That is what we wish!" exclaimed several voices at once.

"And, in return, I hope that you will all support me, gentlemen. I am going to leave my instructions with the Governor and expect that my friends will support and stand by him," indicating Don Sebastian.

"Will Don Sebastian continue to be Governor?"

"Yes, gentleman. I think you will be satisfied with him."

"Yes, that is what I said would suit us," said Estéfano Benites, looking from one to another.

"Well, we must take advantage of the times to make our assessment moderate, eh! In legal business I do not like abuses," said the Colonel warily, looking at the wall.

"Yes, that is just, and that is the custom of all the Sub-Prefects," said Don Sebastian; "It is a good custom and protected the Indians buying here," added Escobedo.

"And have you heard about the trouble with Don Fernando?" inquired Estéfano, in order to know what course to pursue.

"I know a great deal about it, but you people have been badly advised; things are not done in that way. Another time you must act more prudently."

"That is what I explained to them," said Estéfano; "but the sexton is the one to blame, ringing the bell and rousing the people."

"And has that already been proved in the investigation?"

"Yes, señor, and up to now no measures have been taken against that Indian sexton, and only the names of respectable persons are mentioned," replied Estéfano. And Don Sebastian added:

"Really, Colonel, if it had not been for the action of the sexton, nothing would have happened, because, really, Don Fernando is a good man."

"And who is the sexton?" inquired Don Bruno.

"An Indian, Isidro Champi, your excellency, a very plain, simple man, who would like to think he is somebody, because he has many animals," said Escobedo.

"Then, my Governor, do you order the arrest of Isidro Champi at once; put him in prison at the disposition of the Justice, and on my return we will arrange matters," said the Sub-Prefect.

"That is it. We must proceed with energy and justice," observed Estéfano.

"Magnificent! Really, the Indian Champi should pay for his fault," added Don Sebastian.

"Very well. Now I must leave. My horse?" said the colonel going to the door.

During this meeting, the agents and comissaries of Don Sebastian had prepared a grand guard of honour to accompany the Sub-Prefect on his departure; and in the yard were found many horses saddled, and a band of music awaiting the coming forth of the hero. An 'alcalde' in official dress, was holding the reins of the spirited sorrel horse of Colonel Don Bruno Paredes.

In the street was a crowd of masked Indians wearing skirts, with a coloured handkerchief crossed at the shoulder, carrying another handkerchief fastened to a long pole which they waved to the sound of the drum as they danced for the Sub-Prefect, and followed the march of the escort.

"Long live the Sub-Prefect, Colonel Paredes!!"

"Viva—a—a a!!!" shouted a chorus of hoarse voices.

The Sub-Prefect heard, with great satisfaction, his name applauded by that miserable crowd, puffed up, like the frog in the fable, filled with vanity as is every one who reaches by foul means an unmerited position, and with a brilliant calvacade the brave colonel pursued his journey.

Don Sebastian made signs to Estéfano to remain after the others had left, and they plotted together how best to carry out the orders of the Sub-Prefect.

"Well, Don Estéfano, really; you have excelled yourself this time," said Don Sebastian.

"I am glad that my remark proved to be such a good shot," replied the young man with satisfaction.

"Yes, indeed; we shall save ourselves; with the Indian Champi fast in jail there will be no one to say anything."

"That is so. Now let us indite the warrant."

"No need of a warrant, Estéfano. Go you with two officers and arrest him, and take him to jail; everyone heard the order of the Sub-Prefect," said the Governor, and Estéfano, well content, went out to do his work.

Don Sebastian remained alone; but, he was not happy. He knew that a new domestic battle must ensue; his wife and son would surely begin to reason with him and perhaps

conquer again. It was necessary to arm himself and be ready. For this, Don Sebastian appealed to the Supreme reinforcement of cowards, and, striking the table with his hand, shouted out to the "pongo:" "Run quickly to Doña Rufa and tell her to send me a bottle of the best."

The Indian went out like a flash, returning instantly with the bottle and a glass.

The Governor served himself a respectable potion and drank it quickly, saying: "Now let them come; we will meet them face to face."

That which Don Sebastian drank was not the juice of the grape, but alcohol of the sugar cane slightly diluted with water. Its effects are almost instantaneous, dominating the reason and the brain, taking away the man and leaving the brute.

Doña Petronila observed attentively all that occurred at the house since the coming of the new authority, before whom, however, she did not present herself. When she saw the "pongo" enter her husband's room with the provision of drink, her first impulse was to take it away from him and destroy it. But her good sense came to her aid and taught her to refrain. "It will be better to wait until Manuel comes. He will know better what to do," she said.

The night was advancing.

Suddenly a hoarse voice was heard. "What do you want? Really, no one is going to order

me about!" At the same moment a noise was heard as of a chair being thrown to the floor.

Doña Petronila hurried in and on entering the room, she stood for a moment contemplating Don Sebastian who continued shouting like a madman: "No one will order me about; no one!"

He could not speak clearly and could hardly support himself on his feet.

Seeing Doña Petronila he screamed again: "Here comes the wild beast. Fire!" And, catching up a chair, he threw it in her direction. In vain his wife tried to calm him; the shameful scene continued, until the arrival of Manuel who, seizing Don Sebastian suddenly, carried him off to his bedroom.

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CHAPTER VI

Estéfano quickly found his men and went with them to the poor hut of Isidro Champi, who was just taking leave of his family to go to the tower to be ready to ring the 'Holy Mary,' which is tolled on the large bell at twilight.

Isidro was a tall strong man of some forty years of age, with a wife and seven children, five boys and two girls. He wore black pantaloons with red stripes, waist-coat and shirt of scarlet, and a light green jacket. His long thick hair, braided and tied with ribbons woven of vicuña threads, hung in a long plait down his back; his head was covered with a graceful Spanish cap, much used by the Indians on account of its bright colour.

The appearance of Estéfano and his men in the house of Isidro greatly alarmed the Indian family because they were accustomed to look upon a visit from that class of persons as a presage of some misfortune to be expected immediately.

Estéfano was the first to speak.

"Well, Isidro, you have to go to jail by order of the Sub-Prefect."

If the house had been struck by lightning it would not have produced the effect Benites' words did upon the Indians, watchful and suspicious from the moment they saw the officers.

The women knelt before Estéfano, their hands clasped in supplication, sobbing and moaning; the boys rushed to their father, and in the midst of the confusion Isidro could only murmur: "Señor, señor, for what?"

"There is no need for all this noise; come along, and do not be afraid," interrupted Estéfano; "it is nothing; we are going to clear up the matter of the bell ringing."

On hearing this the clean conscience of Isidro gave him courage, and turning to his wife he said: "Calm yourself, then, and later on bring me my poncho,"* and went away resolutely with the officers.

The heart of Isidro's wife could not be calm, because it was the heart of a woman, a mother and a loving wife, who fears everything when her own family are concerned.

Calling her eldest son she said to him: "Michael, did I not tell you when the pot slipped and the milk soured that some misfortune was going to happen to us?"

"Mamma, I have seen the raven pass five times over the roof of the crib," said one of the children.

*A long shawl with a slit in the middle to pass the head through.

"Is that true?" said the Indian woman, pale with terror.

"It is true, true, mamma. What shall we do?"

"We will go to our friend Escobedo. He can speak for us," answered the mother, and, having prepared herself, she set out on her mission.

CHAPTER VII

Don Fernando began to be more and more troubled about the future that awaited him in Killac.

He knew perfectly well that the apparent calm that reigned was not to be trusted. Many things came to his knowledge which he did not communicate to Lucia, whose health was delicate. Providence was going to bless their home with a new treasure, and he hesitated about continuing their life in that benighted place. The duties he had assumed in regard to the orphan children of Marcela required a different life also.

At last he came to a definite resolution and, full of the idea, he went at once to communicate it to Lucia.

"I come to give you some good news, my dear," he said cheerily.

"Good news in these calamitous times? Where do you get it from, Fernando?"

"From my own brain and will," replied he.

"That is clear, but please explain yourself."

"This place troubles our happiness. Lucia, you are going to become a mother, and I do

not wish that the first link in the chain of our future happiness should find its life here."

"And what then?"

"We will leave here definitely within twenty days without fail."

"As soon as that, Fernando?"

"I have it all thought out and have come to warn you to have ready the few articles we need to take with us."

"But where are we going?"

"I am going to take you to the land of flowers, in the beautiful Peruvian capital, where you will dwell in happiness arranging the cradle of our child."

"To Lima!" cried Lucia enthusiastically.

"Yes, to Lima; and, afterwards, when the child we expect is strong enough to endure the long journey, we will take a trip to Europe."

"And Margarita and Rosalia? What will become of them without us? We must care for them from gratitude, Fernando."

"They are our adopted daughters; they will go with us to Lima and there, as we have already planned, we will place them in the college best adapted to form wives and mothers, without wasting their time in exaggerated repetition of words called prayers without idea or sentiment," replied her husband.

"Thank you, Fernando; how good you are."

At that moment two soft knocks were heard on the screen, and the graceful figure of Margarita, more beautiful than ever from the

love and care she received, appeared at the door.

"Señor," said the girl, "Manuel is in the parlour and says he would like to speak with you, Don Fernando."

"Has he been waiting long?"

"Yes, señor."

Don Fernando went out leaving Lucia and Margarita together.

CHAPTER VIII

Let us return for a moment to the priest Pascual whom we left on the eve of departure for a distant city in hope of regaining his health.

For several days he left off the use of liquors and other indulgences, as he pursued his journey, mounted on his favourite horse ; league after league was traversed, but he could leave neither his remorse nor his weakness behind him. Terrible phantoms accompanied him over the heights and through the valleys. At last he arrived at a wayside inn where he could rest himself and exchange his worn out horse for a fresh one. Tired and desperate, his appetite would not be longer denied, and he eagerly asked for and drank the fatal refreshment.

Farewell to all dreams of reform !

When able again to resume his journey they mounted him on a fresh horse and sent him forward. After a few hours' riding the towers of the city loomed into view. Suddenly something frightened his horse, which leaped forward and broke into a run.

Don Pascual was thrown to the ground senseless. Some persons passing at the moment lifted him up and carried to him a large convent of the Barefooted Friars which happened to be near.

The superintendent was a grave, kind-hearted man, who had seen Father Pascual in Killac. He gave him all needed assistance, and when the priest had recovered his senses said to him: "God's mercy is great, brother," and shewed him to a cell to rest.

In the silence of his room Father Pascual felt himself again utterly forsaken, absolutely alone in the world. His feverish delirium returned with double force. Amid sobs and tears he muttered broken remorseful words. Burning with fever and thirst he seized a glass of water that was on a small table, drained it to the last drop, and fell to the floor with a loud cry.

Someone passing near by, hearing the cry, came in and, finding the sick man stretched on the floor, rang the bell so violently that several monks, among them the superintendent, came hurrying in. The poor man was lifted up and placed upon the bed, but life was already extinct.

"Is he dead already? Merciful God!" exclaimed the superintendent clasping his hands and raising his eyes to heaven; then: "Requiescat in pace," as if pronouncing absolution.

With the customary ceremonies the body of Father Pascual was laid away to rest. But the effects of his life,—that sinful, mistaken life,—where shall they end?

CHAPTER IX

Very humiliating for Manuel were the scenes that took place in Don Sebastian's dormitory, when Manuel carried him there by force to save his mother from shame. When Pancorbo had sunk into sleep, Manuel went to look for his mother; he found her weeping.

He kissed her brow and dried her tears, saying: "Courage, mother; save your tears for the time when I shall not be with you."

"My son, I am very miserable."

"You miserable, mother? Are you complaining of God? Has he not given you a son? Have you not my heart and the blood of my veins which I will shed for you?" replied the youth warmly.

"Yes, yes, I am wrong; but God will pardon me, as you will pardon me for forgetting your name. My son, my son; yes, I am a mother," said Doña Petronila taking her son by the hand and making him sit down by her side.

"Poor mother," said Manuel sighing and contradicting his own first thought.

"'Poor woman' you should say, Manuel.

However, each one has some worm that is gnawing at the soul," said Doña Petronila, a little calmer, fingering the fringe of her shawl.

"Mother let us leave complainings and speak calmly of something."

"What do you wish to speak about."

"I wish to know what our present income is. In this world, mother, we cannot take one step forward without knocking first at the door of the treasure house."

"What! Do you wish to return to college, leaving me shut up alone, here in this Babylon?"

"Do not rush too far ahead, mother. I am, as you say, a boy; but remember that contact with books and men, makes us grow older, giving us experience and teaching us to think. I now consider myself a man," said Manuel.

"Yes, you are a man," said his mother looking proudly into the face of her son.

"Well, mother, I wish to say that, having thought over everything thoroughly, I expect to carry out what I have planned in respect to your future and mine."

"What pleasure I have in hearing you speak in that way, my son. With reason have Doña Lucia and Don Fernando congratulated me so much on having such a son."

Manuel took new courage from this, and continued: "Mother, I wish to know what our income is, but without counting that of Don Sebastian."

"Our income?" said Doña Petronila playing

unconsciously with the fringe of her shawl, "how can I calculate our income? We have a good piece of ground that produces corn, wheat, barley, beans, and potatoes; some hundreds of of sheep, cows and alpacas; horses that thresh the harvest. I cultivate the ground, change the fleeces and grain to silver, and part of it goes to you at college. Have I managed well?"

Manuel listened to his mother attentively, and when she had finished he kissed her brow, silently and thoughtfully, carrying in his heart his prayer of gratitude and adoration which that holy abnegation and mother-love merited. The account did not leave any round numbers for the plans he had formed, and he asked again timidly: "And you have not saved anything?"

"What! Do you think me a spendthrift? Do I not know that I have a son? Should I not provide for your future? Do I not know that sometime you will wish to settle down for yourself? Well, well! I have saved one half, and here you have, well hidden away, five bags with two thousand shining dollars in each. You will not have to endure the shame that some do, of having to marry on nothing."

"Blessed be such mothers as you; they find their happiness in the well-being of their sons! I will take, then, for the foundation of my plans, the ten thousand dollars. I wish to propose a plan to you."

"That is what I said. You wish to leave me."

"Remember, mother, that a year lost in my studies would perhaps mean the loss of the profession I have chosen, but I shall not go alone mother, nor will I go to the same University of San Bernardo."

"It will be, then, as you like; but remember that I am the wife of Don Sebastian; linked to him by gratitude, and you must respect him as much as a true father," replied Doña Petronila, lowering her eyes.

"I will not forget it, mother. Now let us rest after such a long day," replied Manuel kissing his mother good night.

CHAPTER X

When once Isidro Champi, the sexton, was shut up in jail, the door did not open again to give him liberty.

Let us see what happened to his wife that afternoon, when she went to the house of their friend Escobedo, to ask for help and advice.

"And so my friend is a prisoner!" exclaimed Escobedo, after the customary salutations had been exchanged, and the woman had given him the tidings.

"Yes, señor; and what shall we do? Will you help us?"

Escobedo replied, tapping her lightly on the shoulder: "Ah! But to ask a favour, you must not come this way with empty hands, and you who have so many herds, eh?"

"Oh, señor! You are right; but I came away from home as if pursued by spirits, and to-morrow, or later, I will not be ungrateful, like the earth without water."

"Well, well! That is another thing; but to go to speak to the Judge and Governor, you must tell me what to offer them."

"I shall carry them a chicken!"

"How silly! What are you saying? Do you think that for one chicken they are going to despatch such a business? My friend is already in the reports for that row when Yupanqui and others died," said Escobedo maliciously.

"Oh, señor! What is it you say?" she inquired wringing her hands.

"That is just what the trouble is, but by making an effort we will get him out. Tell me, how many cows have you? With some four I think that . . "

"With four cows will my Isidro go free?" asked the woman utterly confounded.

"Surely! We will give one to the Governor; one to the Judge; another to the Sub-Prefect, and the fourth remains for your friend," distributed Escobedo walking up and down the room, while the poor woman, sunk into a night of doubt and desolation, went over in her mind, one by one, the animals, separating them by their ages and colours, confusing at times the names of her children with those of her favourite calves.

"Well, what are you thinking about, woman? It seems as if you did not care much for your husband," interrupted Escobedo.

"Heaven save me, señor, for not caring for my Isidro. We have grown up together, suffered together! Alas! but. . . "

"Very well; let us leave all that. I have a great deal to do," said Escobedo hastening to finish the matter.

"Pardon my foolishness, señor, and yes, we will give the four cows—you will take out my Isidro soon?"

"Yes, soon; of course. I will go right to work, and the day after to-morrow, within three days, everything will be arranged. You see, I have to speak to that Don Fernando Marin; he it is who orders the suit."

On hearing the name of Marin, a ray of light crossed the mind of the poor woman and she said to herself: "Why did I not go to him first? perhaps to-morrow morning it will not be too late."

Taking leave of Escobedo she said, "Go, seoñr, without delay. I have to take some covering to Isidro, and will tell him that you are going to save us to-day."

"The mouse fell into the trap," said Escobedo to himself, laughing, and went immediately to tell Estéfano how he had arranged matters and that they would divide the four cows between themselves, keeping them exempt from the 'embargo' decreed upon the property of Champi, by having them offered as property of Escobedo or Benites.

CHAPTER XI

It is well known that in Killac and the neighbouring towns where the simple customs of former times, the social evil which undermines the family and prevents the young from marrying happily, is almost unknown. It is the artful seductions that carry the seed of disgrace and misfortune, and behind each one appears nearly always the figure of some potentate, whose meretricious superiority gains the victim, saving the victor.

The Sub-Prefect was visiting one of the small towns under his jurisdiction. Being a skilled veteran in the art of conquering all who opposed his wishes, he was constantly on the lookout for new worlds to conquer.

This time the victim selected by him was the graceful young daughter of the man in whose house the colonel received sincere hospitality.

Teodora was a pleasant, bright-eyed, young lady of some twenty years. She was betrothed to a young man who was in charge of a neighbouring farm, where he was saving up money for the bridal day and for their future

home. Teodora was a person of strong independent character, entirely devoted to her promised husband.

For five days Colonel Paredes remained at the house of Teodora's father, days of continual feasting and revelry; the house was always filled with all the notables of the place. But the bright, particular star which the Colonel sought, always vanished at his approach; at last he became desperately in earnest. Calling to his side one day the Lieutenant Governor, Paredes said something to him in a low voice; the man smiled maliciously and went out hurriedly. Teodora, who had observed this, quietly called her father aside and said to him: "Father, my heart is in purgatory."

"And why, daughter? you ought to be contented—so many visitors."

"That is just the trouble. The Sub-Prefect has evil intentions concerning me."

"What do you say? The Colonel?"

"Yes, father; he told me that, willing or unwilling, he would carry me off," replied the girl blushing.

"Hum, hum!" murmured the old man biting his lips, and turning around as if to inspect the fields, added: "The coveted dainty will fall from his lips. Am I already a dead fox?" Then turning to his daughter he said carelessly: "Go into the parlour; feign indifference; let them spend a little more of the money robbed from the people, and—keep

your heart for your husband. I know what I will do afterwards."

Soon after came the call to supper and all went to the table where a good and plenteous repast was served. The Sub-Prefect seated himself by the side of Teodora with an air of triumph, saying to the company: "I always seek my own comfort, gentlemen, by the side of a good looking young woman."

"That is the place that belongs to your excellency," said several.

"And where is your father, Teodora?" inquired someone.

"My father? He will be in soon," replied the girl looking around her.

At that moment Don Gaspar appeared, rubbing his hands and proceeding to open a bottle of wine, he said merrily, "Something to quicken the appetite, gentlemen."

"Don Gaspar knows how to do things," said the Sub-Prefect. So the supper commenced merrily.

CHAPTER XII

It was already night when supper was finished, and the company adjourned to the parlour for a dance. Don Gaspar called his daughter to his side, and said softly : "Follow me." Both slipped out quietly, going to a hedge near by where they found three horses saddled, one of them prepared for a woman.

"Where are we going, father?" asked Teodora.

"To Killac,—to the house of my friend Doña Petronila who, as you know, is the right kind of a lady, and by whose side you will be as safe as the holy vessel on the altar," replied Don Gaspar hurrying on.

"Good, and it is well that Sebastian is not Governor any more, so we will be in peace until my Mariano comes," said Teodora, keeping close to her father's side. A dark object appeared at that moment. "Anselmo!" called Don Gaspar.

"Señor!" replied the shadow, and the three continued their march.

When they reached the horses, Teodora was mounted upon hers ; Don Gaspar and Anselmo,

who was a confidential servant of the house, following.

Don Gaspar then said to an Indian who was waiting: "Return to the house; keep everything in order, have the tea ready and if we are missed you know what to do, eh?"

"Yes, Senor," replied the Indian turning away.

Three lashes sounded simultaneously and the three horses sprang forward like a flash in the darkness of the night.

The old man rode on, lost in meditation, as the brain works on without ceasing, and thought does not submit to the quietude of the body.

"Father! Let us slacken our pace a little," called Teodora reining in her horse.

"What! Are you fatigued so soon?"

"I am not fatigued! What an idea; but I have thought of something."

"Speak then," replied her father, holding in his horse.

"It would be better that you should return from here. You will arrive home in half an hour; your presence will quiet all suspicion, and they will go on a while longer without missing me,—and you will make many excuses."

"And you, will you go alone?" asked Don Gaspar.

"I do not run any risk whatever in going with Anselmo, my horse is gentle and knows the road well; the distance is short and the moon will soon rise,—and, above all, if it has occurred to them to look for us if they find out about our journey, there is no doubt they will

follow or perhaps overtake us, and they have been drinking . . ."

"Very true, Teodora; you speak like a prayer book," he said interrupting her, stopping his horse and coughing violently.

"There! You have taken cold already, Go back at once, and if anyone should come looking for us, by your return they will loose the track."

"All right, and before I declare where you are they may skin me," replied Don Gaspar.

"Anselmo! Anselmo!" he shouted. The servant came up and received his instructions.

"Good-bye, daughter! Within four days I will go to look for you."

"Good-bye, father! Cover up your mouth,—your cough is bad."

"Knock cautiously when you arrive and tell my friend Petronila everything. The frog knows in what water it can swim."

"Yes, I will tell her everything."

"Anselmo, take care of my daughter." So saying Don Gaspar turned his horse and galloped towards home.

It would be somewhere about eleven o'clock that night when Teodora and Anselmo, arrived at the house of Dona Petronila. They knocked loudly, and at the noise four or five dogs began to bark furiously, while a sleepy voice inquired shortly: "Who is it?"

"I come from Don Gaspar Sierra to deliver to Doña Petronila a pledge which he sends her."

No further explanations were asked; the

door opened and Teodora passed in and was received by the mother of Manuel with her proverbial kindness.

* * * *

Don Gaspar had not gone two miles from the place where he left Teodora, when he began to distinguish the shouting and tramping of people on horseback. In a few minutes he could see clearly that they were the followers of the Sub-Prefect.

"Yes! How well Teodora guessed what would happen. Women are witches! and the best of it is that we men, all of us, let ourselves be bewitched by them, eyes and ears," said Don Gaspar to himself, following on at an even pace.

CHAPTER XIII

Not long after Teodora's flight, she was missed by the company. The Lieutenant Governor was the first to give the notice.

"The old man is the one to blame, Colonel," he said, "for to all appearance the girl was ready enough to please you."

"Do they think to fool me that way,—me? I will not consent; never. No señor, I will not consent, by the word of a soldier," declared Paredes pacing excitedly up and down the room: "Come on, friends, let us look for her" proposed the Lieutenant,catching up a lighted candle.

"Yes, señor, I will hunt out any girl from the depths of the earth. Yes señor!" shouted the Prefect with fury; while his officious followers went out to search the entire house questioning and cross-questioning all the servants, although all answered alike: "They have gone out into the street."

"Did they go out on foot?"

"No, señor, they went on horseback."

"Your excellency we will follow them," was shouted in chorus, "there is only one road."

"To the work, then, friends; to the one who brings me the girl . . . ."

"I swear that I will be the fortunate one," interrupted the Lieutenant. The commission was named and those designated went after their horses. The wrath of the Sub-Prefect was ready to break out anew. He said to himself: "The old man! If they would bring him to me now I would shoot him without the form of a council of war! One is not put in a place of authority for nothing! But the boys are active and . . . . I will rest a moment," so saying he threw himself down on a bed in a corner of the room and soon began to doze.

In a few minutes he heard the galloping of horses, and, opening his eyes, Don Bruno Paredes said between his teeth: "They have started already. Yes, Señor; very soon I shall be pleased, thanks to the activity of my subordinates. These boys are worth a mine of silver."

A few moments after the departure of the men in search of Teodora, a message arrived, sealed with red sealing wax and stamped with the seal of the Republic, marked "Official—Urgent," and addressed to Colonel Bruno Paredes.

When this was put in the hands of the Colonel he began to read it as he was, half reclining on the bed; but no sooner had he gathered the meaning of the first few lines, than he sprang to his feet as if thrown up by some electric force. He turned pale, then all the

blood seemed to rush to his head; he remained standing a moment as if in suspense, then threw the paper on the bed exclaiming: "Ho! ho! this has a bad look. The best thing for me to do is to make myself safe, yes señor!" and, raising his voice, began to shout for the servants who came running from different directions.

"My horse! Quick, quick!!"

Don Bruno mounted in haste, and, followed by three of his suite, galloped away in the direction of the city. "The most prudent plan is to escape at once. In the city I will find some hiding-place until the political tempest calms down," he muttered to himself.

. . . . . .

The people who went in search of Teodora met Don Gaspar jogging along on his pony and surrounded him, whilst the Lieutenant began: "Well, old man! This is a fine trick you have played us! Where is the girl Teodora?"

"How?" replied Don Gaspar, feigning anxiety, "you are looking for my daughter? What! Did I not leave her with you all? Happily she is honest, and . . . . she will be there, come on," applying the whip to his horse that began to jump about briskly.

"Softly, softly!!" observed several, taking hold of the bridal, and the Lieutenant added: "Come on then, but if you do not deliver up the girl . . . ."

"She cannot have gone away, there has not

been time to go to any town and return," said one.

"And if you did not go away with Teodora, Don Gasper, what are you doing about here?" asked the Lieutenant.

"O, go along with you! You do not seem to belong about here; you must have come from Lima with a cane and stiff collar! I have come from making the circuit of the pastures and looking after the sheep," observed Don Gaspar with much formality.

"Let us refresh ourselves a little," said one.

They stopped, and the leader taking out a bottle passed it to each one. This operation was repeated several times during the return journey.

They found everything quiet at the house of Don Gaspar. The "pongos" in the yard were sleeping so soundly that it required some vigorous shaking to arouse them.

"Where is the Señor Sub-Prefect?"

"The Señor Sub-Prefect has gone away on horseback," replied one of the "pongos."

"Without doubt we have been absent a long time and he has gone in search of us," observed one.

They entered the parlour, and as Don Gaspar lighted the candle that was found near the bed, the first thing he saw was the sheet of paper which Don Bruno had thrown down and forgotten. All gathered around to read it.

"So our Sub-Prefect has run away," said Don Gaspar.

"A Colonel of . . . ." said one.

"A coward!" said another.

"A deserter!!" added a third.

"An ex-authority, explained Don Gaspar laughing, like one who has lived long and heard much. Taking up a guitar from the corner he began to play and sing.

CHAPTER XIV

The next day after his important interview with his mother, Manuel went to Don Fernando's. He found Margarita alone in the reception room reading. On seeing her Manuel said to himself: "Now I have a good opportunity to sound her heart, and declare my affection." After saluting her he continued:

"All alone, Margarita; it is the first time I have the opportunity of speaking to you alone; perhaps the moments will be short, for I came to see Don Fernando,—therefore I beg you to listen to me, my Margarita!" said Manuel taking the girl's hand and looking at her tenderly.

"Why, Manuel, how strange you are," said she.

"Do not call me strange, Margarita; you are the soul of my soul, and ever since I have known you I have given you my heart, and . . . . I wish to be worthy of you!" said Manuel, employing the last phrase because of the fear he had that Margarita would repulse him who was the son of he who had sacrificed Marcela,—an idea which could not exist in the

girl of to-day, but might, perhaps, in the woman of to-morrow.

The orphan remained mute, blushing like the poppy. There are occasions in which silence reveals more than words.

Manuel caressed the diminutive hand that was lost in his.

"Speak, Margarita! You are still a child, but you know how I love you! Remember that by the side of your blessed mother I asked to be your brother; to-day....."

"Yes, Manuel, I see you in my joys and in my sorrows, you will be my brother," replied the girl.

But Manuel responded quickly: "No, my angel! Brother is little, and I love you much; I wish to be your husband."

"My husband!" said Margarita, and in that moment the veil was withdrawn from her eyes. Margarita knew from that she was a woman,—knew that she loved.

"Yes, your husband," and Manuel kissed the brow of Margarita, as purely and lightly as the morning breeze might caress the white petals of the lily.

Margarita, blushing, turned away saying,

"I will call Don Fernando," and went immediately to Lucia's room.

CHAPTER XV

When Lucia found herself alone with Margarita, after Don Fernardo had gone in to see Manuel, she said to her: "How happy you will be Margarita, when you hear what I have to tell you. You and Rosalia will not take your journey to Lima alone."

"Who else is going?" asked the girl quickly.

"Don Fernando and I, all the family."

"All of us. How glorious! And Manuel, will he go also?" asked Margarita.

Lucia fixed her eyes upon Margarita to measure the impression her reply would cause, and said: "Manuel will not go; he has his parents here."

A short silence ensued. Margarita's eyes filled with tears which in vain she tried to hide, saying: "What a beautiful city Lima must be."

"It is the most beautiful city in Perú. But why do you weep, Margarita?" said Lucia drawing the girl to her side. "My dear, I notice that you are much inclined to Manuel, and now I understand that this young man has impressed your girl's heart, and I begin to fear

that to-morrow your woman's heart will also belong to him."

"It is that Manuel is so good; I have never seen him do anything wrong," said the girl timidly.

"Exactly, my dear! His kindness has made me fall into a net which it is necessary to cut in order to free you. You cannot love the son of the man who sacrificed your parents. Oh! it horrifies me! Poor Manuel!" Lucia, overcome by emotion, could not continue.

Poor Margarita! She remained mute and trembling, like a white lily upon whose stalk the nightingale has attempted to alight without folding its wings. After the interview which she had just had with Manuel, this declaration of Lucia's was cruel, disturbing her soul, blighting at birth the flowers of hope of two hearts united together by the ties that constitute human felicity,—of two hearts that loved each other.

At last Lucia recovered her serenity, and cutting off the thread of her former conversation, said to Margarita: "My dear, be careful to have your trunk ready for Wednesday, and do not forget your sister's things; you are older and should help her."

"I will see about it now," replied the girl as she left the room.

"Poor Manuel! Poor Margarita!" continued Lucia to herself when alone. "My situation is as difficult as theirs. Poor victims of human cruelty. What shall I do? I will talk it over

with Fernando; he will dispel my doubts and light will come. I cannot forget that Marcela died leaving to me two pieces of her heart."

Lucia was right. She could share with Don Fernando her doubts, her fears and hopes, putting to one side the shadows of the moment.

Manuel could confide to his mother, that noble hearted woman, the pain and sorrow that tormented him; she could soothe the sorrows of the man of to-day as yesterday she wiped away the tears of the boy.

But Margarita? Poor orphan,—bird without a nest,—she would have to seek the shade of a strange tree, to sing under its foliage the idyl of her soul united to another;—she would have to hide her own thoughts, laugh with her lips and weep in her heart.

Lucia was for Margarita the best of women, but Lucia was not her mother.

CHAPTER XVI

Don Fernando found Manuel still absorbed in the reflections caused by the sudden departure of Margarita.

"How are you, Manuel?" he said giving his hand to his visitor.

"Excuse my visit, Don Fernando; it is not the proper hour, but in these cases urgency of business is the passport," replied Manuel.

"There is no call for ceremony, Manuel. You know that I am your friend and that is sufficient," said Don Fernando drawing forward a chair for the young man.

"I know it so well that without your friendship I think I should have become insane. My position before you, so difficult since the assault; the many contradictory events that have taken place since my arrival here,—where the people in authority pay no attention either to law or religion; and other things that occupy my thoughts;—these all weigh upon me."

"True, Manuel; the present state of this small place horrifies me. Also I have heard the sad news of the death of Father Pascual."

"He is dead?"

"Yes. He was thrown from his horse, found by some charitable people and taken to the convent where he was cared for by the monks. They say that on taking a glass of water he died immediately. The doctors think his death was caused by a sudden rush of blood to the brain. Poor man, let him rest in peace."

"But, Don Fernando,—varying the subject a little,—I find it impossible to live in this town, governed, as it is, so tyranically, by persons who presume so much upon a little authority. Then, if I wish to finish my studies and be received as a lawyer I must go away; but I cannot decide to leave my mother in this den of wolves."

"Well, my friend, I have just decided this grave matter in the same way. Within a few days I leave with my family."

"You, Don Fernando!" interrupted the young man in surprise.

"Yes; I have arranged to transfer my shares in the mines and other property to some Jews who give me twenty per cent, and so I go satisfied."

"And where are you going?"

"To the capital. In Lima I presume that the home will be protected, and the authorities will know how to fulfil their mission. I would like to do something to liberate the poor sexton before I go."

"I am with you heart and soul, Don Fernando. We will both do everything possible for that poor Indian. Now it seems

that destiny smiles upon me. I have come to speak to you about something relative to my projects."

"I will listen with pleasure."

"As I said, I desire to take my mother away from here. I have taken all the steps necessary for taking her away, under the pretext of a visit to Lima, and once there there will be no boat to return in!"

"Perfectly right, and Don Sebastian?" inquired Señor Marin with curiosity.

"You know that the true centre of light and warmth in the house is the mother; after my mother I would assist Don Sebastian, whose future is also one of the saddest here . . . ah, Don Fernando, you cannot guess all the oppressive acts I endure for love of my mother."

"Don Manuel, your manner of expressing yourself regarding your father has attracted my attention for some time," said Don Fernando, inspiring by the tone of his voice, a certain confidence in the young man.

"I presumed so, Señor Marin. My birth is hidden by a mysterious veil and if, some time, my hand draws it aside, it will be before you who are a gentleman and my best friend."

Don Fernando had learned what he needed, for the mutual impressions of Manuel and Margarita had not passed unperceived by him. Manuel was not, could not be the son of Sebastian Pancorbo.

"Who can be his father?" he asked himself.

"I might question him, exact his confidence as from friend to friend, obtain the secret and have the field to myself. But I ought to respect the prudent reserve of the young man; the occasion will come."

Turning to Manuel he said: "I believe myself to be worthy of your confidence. But let us return to your petition."

"I desire that you should help me to send some funds to Lima and deposit them in some good commercial house."

"With the greatest pleasure. We can work through some of the banks, the 'Providence,' the 'London,' the 'Mexican,' anyone which you select."

"Let it be the 'London.'"

"Very well. How much do you wish me to remit?"

"For the present some ten thousand dollars. Later as much more, for I intend to sell all the property here."

"It shall be done. This afternoon you can pass the money into Salas, and to-morrow you shall have your papers. And now, allow me to congratulate you on your resolution; very well planned. You will be a man useful to your country like many others who have gone from the provinces to the capital. You will be an honour to your family, I assure you," said Don Fernando.

Manuel bowed his appreciation of these remarks, and was going to declare to Don Fernando that the inspiration to all his efforts

was the thought of Margarita, but some feeling kept him from doing so.

"Your mother must have suffered a great deal."

"Oh, cruelly! A woman's heart is as sensitive as an angel's. My poor mother!" Then taking another thought he added: "Do you know what happened last night to complicate matters still further?"

"What happened?"

"There came to us from the neighbouring town of Saucedo a young woman, who is now sheltered in our house from the persecutions of the Sub-Prefect Paredes."

"The girl should have paid some tax or fiscal income?"

"Nothing of the kind. The colonel was pleased with her youthful beauty and wished to make her his without other benediction than his own dictatorial will!"

"And so?"

"She ran away from home, aided by her father, to take shelter with my mother."

"So then, in these parts of the world, the victims who escape the hands of the priests fall into the power of the authorities!"

"As you see," replied Manuel.

"This horrifies me. And if we fix our eyes on the Indians, the heart grows desperate before the oppression which they endure from the priests and the 'caciques!'"

"Ah, Señor Fernando, these things cannot fail to afflict an honourable man coming from

other parts, who sees and feels. When I write my graduating discourse I intend to prove with all these facts, the necessity of eclesiastical marriage, that is, of the priests."

"You will touch upon a fact of vital importance, a point which social progress must make clear before many years have elapsed."

"That is my conviction also, Don Fernando."

"And what can you tell me of the authorities who come to govern these out-of-the-way parts of the rich and wide Perù?" asked Don Fernando.

"Ah, my friend! They seek employment, salary and comfort without having taken notice of the words of Epaminondas: 'It is the *man* who dignifies destiny.'"

"It is because everything goes by favour," replied Don Fernando.

At that moment Doña Petronila appeared at the door accompanied by Teodora, whom she presented with manifest kindness and respect.

CHAPTER XVII

Don Fernando invited the newcomers to be seated, and sent for his wife. Meanwhile Doña Petronila said softly to her son: "I have found you out, my boy. I know now."

"Mother!" said Manuel, like a boy asking pardon.

Don Fernando addressed himself to Teodora: "Señorita, have you arrived recently?"

"Yes, señor; I have come from Saucedo and have been here only a few hours."

Lucia entered, saluting both ladies cordially.

Doña Petronila, loosening her shawl, said frankly: "What do you think of that harpy, Colonel Paredes, who, after planting the seeds of discord in my family, went to the house of my friend Don Gaspar Sierra to rob him of his daughter?"—indicating Teodora.

"Mother!" said Manuel timidly.

"Why should I not speak plainly? Don Fernando and Doña Lucia know all about these things," said Doña Petronila, and she gave a full account of what had occurred at Saucedo, to which both husband and wife listened attentively.

Teodora's cheeks were like two cherries, and she remained with her eyes fixed upon the floor, without courage to raise them to the kind faces about her. It was one of the most trying moments of her life.

"I like your way of treating the Sub-Prefect,' said Don Fernando, and Lucia joined in words of congratulation and praise for her resolution and courage.

"These towns are becoming worse every day," said Don Fernando; then, turning to Doña Petronila, he added: "You ought to save your husband and encourage your son, who is a thorough gentleman."

Lucia added: "True, my friend; this is no longer any place for us; we must take flight to other and serener regions. We shall leave here very soon."

"You are going away?"

"Yes; we have resolved to do so very soon."

"What sad news I have come to hear," said Doña Petronila, to whom Manuel turned to say: "Now it only remains for you to decide also, mother, and we shall all be contented."

"Margarita, come in," said Lucia, seeing the girl pass the door.

Lucia wished to see what impression Margarita would make upon Doña Petronila.

"Let me present to you my god-child, Margarita," said Lucia taking the girl by the hand and turning to the mother of Manuel and Teodora.

"Margarita! Is it not true that she wears

her flower-name well?" added Manuel when his mother embraced the orphan with showers of caresses and words of praise, which sounded like celestial music in the ears of the young man.

To interrupt this peaceful scene came a woman, terror-stricken and weeping, who from the door cried between her sobs: "Señor Fernando, charity for the Virgin's sake."

"Who is that unhappy woman?" inquired Don Fernando in surprise.

"It is Martina, wife of Champi," replied Doña Petronila.

Lucia, covering her face with her hands, said to herself: "Marcela! Marcela! She looks as if she might be her sister."

Turning to the woman, Don Fernando asked: "Who are you and what do you want?"

"I am the the wife of Isidro Champi, the sexton" The last phrase tore the veil away completely.

"Don Fernando and Manuel exchanged glances, and the former said: "Ah yes! I know; your husband is a prisoner, is he not?"

"Yes, señor; and now they have just taken away our animals also."

"Who has taken them?"

"The authorities, señor."

"But who are these authorities?"

"The Judge and the Governor. Señor, mercy!" cried Martina kneeling at the feet of Don Fernando.

"Rise, and be calm!" said Don Fernando giving Martina his hand.

"Yes, yes; we will save you. Everything will be arranged," added Manuel.

"You do not persecute us, then?" she asked Señor Marin.

"No, no, my good woman, no!"

"You will save us then, will take Isidro out of prison and our animals from the 'embargo'?"

"Yes, yes, we will defend you."

"Cruel, heartless," repeated all,—and Martina, without other promises than those of Don Fernando, went out full of the hopes which her loving wifely heart wished to carry without delay to her imprisoned husband.

CHAPTER XVIII

Let us retrace our steps a moment. Martina, the wife of Isidro Champi, as soon as she left the house of Escobedo, after sacrificing the four cows to the avarice of her friend, frightened at the news that the imprisonment of her husband was really because of the ringing of the bells at the time of the attack, went running to her house, took the warm "poncho" for Isidro and hurried to the jail.

The jailor gave her free entrance; when she saw her husband she began to cry like a crazy woman: "Isidro! Isidro! Where do I see you. Alas, alas! Your heart and mine are clean from robbery and death! Alas, alas!"

"Patience, Martina; keep your tears and pray to the Virgin," replied Isidro, trying to calm his wife who, drying her eyes with the border of the "poncho," replied: "Do you know, Isidro, that I have been to see our friend Escobedo, and he says that he will soon set you free."

"He has said so?"

"Yes, and I have already paid him."

"What have you paid him? Has he asked for money?"

"No. He says they have arrested you because of the bell ringing that night of the assault on the house of Don Fernando—and so many deaths there were! and that señor—they say—has money and will persecute us," said the woman crossing herself as she thought of the dead.

"And that was what Estéfano said also," replied Isidro; and going back to his first question, —for he knew full well the power and customs of the notables of the place,—he said: "But what did you pay? Tell me plainly."

"Isidro! Do not be angry; you are getting as bitter as the bark of the 'Molle.'"

"Come, Martina, have you come to torture me like the worm that gnaws at the heart of the sheep? Speak, or else go and leave me alone—I do not know why you will not tell me what you paid."

"Well, Isidro, I have given to our friend what he asked, because you were in prison; because I am your dove-mate; because I must save you although it be at the cost of my life. Do not be angry, Isidro! I have given him the two chestnuts, the black and the spotted one," enumerated Martina drawing nearer her husband.

"Ay, four heifers!" exclaimed the Indian lifting up his hands and giving such a deep sigh that we do not know whether it lifted one weight from his heart, or left one in place of another.

"Yes. He wished that I should give him the cows, and it was like taking the grass out by the roots that I could get the 'yes' from him for the cows, for one has to go to the Governor, one to the Sub-Prefect, one to the Judge and one to our friend."

The Indian listened in silence to this relation, inclining his head gloomily without daring to say anything to Martina, who, after waiting some moments, went away to her children, drying new tears, her heart divided between the prison and her cabin.

In the meantime, Escobedo, meeting Estéfano, said to him: "Comrade, everything is sure; the Indian Isidro gave up the four cows. The woman came crying and I told her the case was serious, because the imprisonment was for the bell ringing."

"And what then?"

"She offered me hens! What do you think of that?"

"But she gave up the cows?"

"Yes. Now, how shall we divide them?"

"We will give one to the Sub-Prefect,—it is best to go directly to the saint,—and the remaining three for . . . no names," said Benites.

"Good, and the Indian,—shall he go out or not?"

"It would not suit us for him to go out just now; we will humbug him for a month or so, then the sentence will be given, for first comes the hide, then the flesh, my son," argued Benites.

"That is very true; one is before two. And the 'embargo'?"

"The distress warrant will come in due form, and then we will take out at least four cows more of course."

"You talk like a book, Estéfano; it is not strange that everyone makes you their secretary," added Escobedo rubbing his hands.

"And why should one study in the school of the lash, except to dictate to others, earn a living and be a public man—a man of respect," replied Estéfano with emphasis.

"When will the warrant be made?"

"It can be done within ten days, and now an idea occurs to me. You must not go to the seizure, then we can make the Indian believe that you, being his friend, have interested yourself in taking care of the herds; for if they are entrusted with someone else, he will carry them away!"

"Magnificent! But what will Don Hilarión say?"

"Oh, the old man never even reads what I write; he says 'amen' to everything."

"And Don Sebastian?"

"Don Sebastian will say: 'Really, that seems to me to be right,'" said Estéfano laughing boisterously.

"Very good! And now that we have everything clearly arranged, what do you say to something to moisten our tongues?" and the two comrades in evil-doing directed their steps to the nearest drinking place.

CHAPTER XIX

The change of authority was effected peacefully in the province. The new Sub-Prefect directed the customary circulars to the different functionaries under his supervision, invoking law, justice and equity.

Don Gaspar came over to Killac to relate to his daughter all that had occurred in Saucedo since her flight,—to thank Doña Petronila for her hospitality, and to accompany his daughter back to his house to take up anew her tranquil country life until the day for her marriage with the honest Mariano should come.

No one knew anything about the stopping place of Colonel Paredes, for after riding a few miles he dismissed his escort and went on alone to find a safe refuge. It was discovered long after that he had a good fortune, well secured, —the fruit of many well-laid schemes—lawful when considered according to the old adage, that "Might makes right."

Don Sebastian, seeing his new plans suddenly frustrated, grew peevish and gloomy; smiting his breast he would cry: "Really, my wife and Manuel knew what they were about. I am sorry I did not follow their advice."

Such a confession was a new support to Manuel, who soon found his opinions respected and obeyed. As for Manuel, many long talks did he have with himself during the quiet evenings when alone in his room.

"Why," he would soliloquize, "am I so anxious to leave the place where I was born, when it is man's natural impulse to love and seek for the upbuilding of the place where he first saw the light? Why do I not aspire to live here where Margarita was born, and where by her side sprang up, beautiful and bright, the flower of my love? Ah, this seeming contradiction is explained and justified by cruel experiences. Those places where one cannot count upon any guarantee for property or family, soon become uninhabited; all who can dispose of sufficient means to do so, emigrate to a more civilized country, and when one finds himself in a situation like mine—alone against two, one against five thousand—there is no remedy but to fly and seek in other parts tranquility for my friends, and the eternal spring of my own heart. Margarita mine, you would become hardened and benumbed by the winter of deceit and crime in this place where all good sentiments are killed by the frosts of abuse and bad example. In another clime you will live fresh and beautiful, where your soul will be understood and your beauty admired; you will be the sun that will give me warmth and life under the shade of a strange tree!"

CHAPTER XX

The object of Doña Petronila's visit to Señor Marin was not simply to introduce Teodora and relate the news from Saucedo, but also to obtain from Don Fernando some recommendation to the new authority. Therefore, as soon as Martina Champi had gone, she said: "I have come to trouble you, Don Fernando, with a petition."

"It will never be a trouble, Doña Petronila."

"They tell me that you are a friend of the new Sub-Prefect."

"I am acquainted with him, it is true; but very slightly. But what can I do for you?"

"I wish a letter of recommendation for Teodora and her father. After what they have passed through the poor things will be trembling for fear that other bad people, like that colonel, will be going there."

"I am sorry that I am not able to serve you myself, but will seek the influence of some friend."

"Is not Salas a relative of the new Sub-Prefect," suggested Lucia.

"Yes, but it is not of him I am thinking, but

of Guzmán, because Guzmán will help me to work for Isidro Champi."

"And you also, Doña Petronila, for your part see how Don Sebastian can arrange the matter of the poor Indian," recommended Lucia.

"That will be my charge," replied Doña Petronila, as she took leave and retired with Teodora and Manuel, to whom Don Fernando said: "We will see each other again soon to arrange about Champi."

The two remaining alone in the room, Lucia said to her husband: "Do not think that it is only a piece of womanly wisdom, Fernando, but I believe that Margarita and Manuel love each other."

"I should be very glad to have it so, Lucia."

"But Fernando . . . the ideas of society, the duties of conscience! Margarita is the daughter of Marcela, heroic mother, victim of Don Sebastian, and Manuel is the son of the man who caused her death."

"Oh, my dear! Here is where I have the better of you," said her husband, smiling,— "Manuel has let me see that there is a mystery in his birth. This history I expect to understand some day, and I can assure you that I have never believed this worthy young man is the son of Sebastian; Manuel has let slip some words at times that have entirely convinced me of the fact."

"Well, you have cheered me, Fernando; that detail will solve a problem that filled me

with pain—because I have sown the seeds of aversion in the tender heart of our Margarita."

"How, in what way?"

"By indicating Manuel as the son of the man responsible for the death of her mother."

"That was very imprudent; but if she loves him, aversion will not have taken root in her heart, and Margarita will be doubly happy the day she knows that Manuel is not the son of the abusive Governor of Killac."

"From to-day, my dear Fernando, I shall work to dissipate from the heart of my god-child the shadow which my imprudent words have cast upon it. It would really be an advantageous match for our Margarita."

"It could not be better, Lucia; I admire that young man; studious and thoughtful, he finds in his own inspirations the stimulus for work, and I foresee that he will become a distinguished lawyer, capable of adding brilliancy to the Peruvian Forum. And besides, Lucia, the means that he has at his command are more than sufficient to maintain his family well."

"Your words give me great pleasure, Fernando. They must be happy."

"It is our duty, Lucia, to try to secure the happiness of Margarita."

"I quite agree with you, Fernando. I vowed this to Marcela when she was on the threshold of her grave. She deposited in my soul the secret that Margarita is the daughter of that man, and revealed to me the particulars that you already know. And now Margarita will be

as happy as I am, if she loves Manuel as I love you, my Fernando."

"Flatterer!" said Don Fernando lovingly.

Why had Lucia revealed to Don Fernando Marcela's secret? Is it true that women can never keep a secret? No! Lucia loved her husband too much to be silent, and this explains the intimacy inherent in a marriage that realizes the enchanting theory of two souls blended in one, constituting thus the joy of the husband who is permitted to read as in an open book, the heart of the woman, who, in giving her hand, gives also the tenderness of a loving soul. Lucia, born and reared in a refined and sheltered home, when she put on her white bridal robes, accepted for herself the new home with all the charms offered by the love of husband and children, leaving to him the business and turmoil of life and following out the grand ideas of the Spanish writer, which she had read many times, seated at her mother's side. "Forget, poor women, your dreams of emancipation and liberty. Those are theories of sickly minds which can never be practised, because woman was born to grace the home."

"And now," said Don Fernando, "I must occupy myself with the family of the sexton."

"Fernando, my heart trembled with terror when Martina entered. I seemed to see the image of Marcela, and you do not know what dark presentiments filled my mind."

"Do not fear, my dear, I will not rush ahead blindly in these things, but it is impossible to

allow them to assassinate another man with the stoicism of an executioner."

"I would like to be far away from Killac that I might not see nor hear of these things."

"Have patience, my dear Lucia, only a few more moments remain to you in this hateful place. Manuel will take charge of everything in conference with Guzmán; I will write to the latter now."

Going to his office, Don Fernando wrote the following letter,—

"Killac, December 13th, 187—
"Señor Don Federico Guzmán,
"Clear Water.

"My dear friend:

"I am on the eve of retiring to the capital, a resolution which I have taken for reasons which you are already acquainted with.

"I have need of your friendship and influence with the new Sub-Prefect to liberate from imprisonment Isidro Champi, the sexton here, who has been arrested by the true criminals in the assault of the 5th of August. I am perfectly convinced that this Indian is entirely innocent; but here nothing can be done against the machinations of the mass of the neighbours who constitute the three powers, viz. ecclesiastical, judicial and political.

"I almost dare to assure you that Benites Estéfano, Pedro Escobedo and the Governor Pancorbo are the true culprits, the priest Pascual having left this world.

"Perhaps it will seem strange to you that I should seek the intervention of the political authority in this business submitted to the justice; but if you reflect a moment upon the persons who administer justice here, you will readily understand the necessity of having some just, well-intentioned authority to compel the fulfilment of the laws. I have no interest in the prosecution of the case. My sole desire is to save the sexton whose sad fate pains me and that

is all I recommend to you. If you can succeed in this I shall thank you from the very depth of my soul.

"I need also, a letter of recommendation from you for the Sub-Prefect in favour of Don Gaspar Sierra and family. Here they still attach a great deal of importance, my friend, to letters of recommendation, which, for me, is a good indication, because they still believe in friendship and disinterested services and have not been told that in other parts no recommendation is possible without an ounce of gold.

"Give me your orders, my dear friend, and accept the kind regards of Lucia and dispose, at your pleasure, of

"Your friend and servant,

FERNANDO MARIN."

Folding and sealing this letter Don Fernando put it in his pocket and went out into the street where he expected to meet Manuel.

CHAPTER XXI

Martina penetrated into the cell where her husband was with a quick step and agitated manner, but the darkness which reigned in the place for one who entered from the light blinded her eyes for the moment. The faint light that found its way through a sky light, partly covered with adobes, at length enabled her to see the walls, the floor, and finally, a kind of bed upon which her husband sat contemplating her without daring to ask a question for fear of hearing of some new misfortune.

On distinguishing her husband, Martina cried enthusiastically: "Isidro! banish from your heart the black pain. The Sr. Fernando does not prosecute us; it is false! I have seen him."

"You have seen him?"

"Yes, I have seen him; have spoken to him, and he told me that he would save you—would save us!"

"He has told you so?—and you believe it?"

"Why should I not believe him? He is not of this place, Isidro: it is only in our town that the devil shakes his cloak scattering confusion and deceit."

"And what did he ask you in payment?"

"Nothing! He did not even ask if we had sheep."

"Truly?" asked the Indian, opening his eyes.

"True, true, Isidro! And he says that it is not he who prosecutes you. I believe that he will save us, because he is sheltering the daughters of Yupanqui; do not doubt, Isidro; Holy Mary will be angry. The clouds do cover the sun, the evening darkens, but those clouds pass, gathered up by the one who spreads them, and the sun appears and shines and warms anew."

"Perhaps, perhaps, Martina," said the Indian sighing and changing his position.

"By the Virgin, Isidro! Our sorrows will pass also! Without doubt you did not remember to commit yourself to the Virgin when you tolled the bells in the morning, and that is why so much misfortune has fallen upon us, like the frost that burns the leaves and blasts the ears of the corn," said Martina, seating herself by the side of Isidro.

"It may be, Martina, but . . . it is never late to repent. The earth may be one, two, three, even four years without giving fruit. Suddenly it arouses and fills the cribs and barns."

"Well, repeat the 'Hail Mary,' and good-bye until to-morrow. I go to our children."

"What do the children say? Why do you not bring them?"

"When they ask for you I tell them you have gone on a journey. Michael remains silent, for he understands; I cannot deceive him longer.

Bring them here? For what? It is enough that you and I should know the prison. Until to-morrow then," she said, and kissed Isidro with the chaste and peaceful kiss of a dove.

While this scene was passing between Isidro and his wife, in the house of Estéfano Benites were gathered together several neighbours commenting upon the late events over their glasses, when Escobedo arrived and called out from the door: "What have you here: where there are so many flies there must be honey."

"Enter, friend," replied Estéfano, preparing to serve the new comer. "Sit here; come this way; here friend," were the greetings of several.

"No, thanks, friends, I am busy," he replied, receiving the glass from Estéfano, to whom he said softly: "I need you."

"To your health, gentlemen!" said Estéfano, then retired with Escobedo to the door, where the following conversation ensued.

"Do you know that Don Fernando is taking measures in favour of Champi?"

"Ah, but do they not say that he is going away?"

"Yes. It is true that he is leaving, but that does not prevent him from defending the Indian; and if he puts in his arm we shall lose both rope and goat."

"That must not be. What! Allow ourselves to lose four—no—at least eight cows? That is not possible!"

"The son of Don Sebastian is also concerned in this matter."

"What! I do not understand what this pedantic young fellow means!"

Estéfano remained silent a few minutes with his eyes fixed on the floor. Suddenly he exclaimed: "I will hide myself with the reports and decrees."

"That is a good idea."

"What we need now is to find out on what day that brazened-face villain Marin leaves. Of that little Manuel I have no fear. Don Sebastian is there, and, as a last resort, we will give him a beating!"

"That is it. I will ascertain immediately the day fixed for Marin's departure and the steps he is taking."

"And I will take a journey to the end of the earth. Let them find me."

"Magnificent! No sooner said than done! We shall leave that meddlesome Marin shaven and shorn."

"Let us take another drink, then let the ducks swim!" said Estéfano; both went to the table, and, after drinking the health of all present, Escobedo retired to execute his commission.

CHAPTER XXII

Days passed on and the clouds were clearing away, leaving a brighter sky.

Manuel was going to Lima to enter the San Carlos University. His soul entertained the hope of being near Margarita, whose entrance into one of the best colleges had been resolved upon.

In the meantime, all the steps taken by Don Fernando and Manuel to have Isidro released from prison were fruitless.

The Justice shut himself up in his castle of forms and ceremonies and contented himself by offering to the parties interested a rapid dispatch of the business.

Don Fernando found it impossible to postpone his journey. He said to his wife one morning: "I have formed a plan, my dear, by which I think we can make a general reconciliation between the neighbours and ourselves, but with the idea of gaining the liberty of Isidro."

"What is it, Fernando? Oh! may God inspire you, for truly it would be very painful to go away leaving that unhappy man in prison."

"We will give a farewell banquet on the

morning of our departure and there we will compromise all in favour of Isidro. I believe that they have imprisoned him only that he may appear culpable and justify themselves. Once we are gone, all motive for continuing the case will disappear, and the liberty of Isidro be assured."

"My dear Fernando, I approve heartily of your idea and will at once order everything to be prepared, but it will cost us something, for I have seen that they try to cheat both the newly arrived and the departing guest."

"No matter, my dear; how much money is thrown away in useless things? Let it be our caprice to try to free this Indian. Will one hundred dollars be sufficient?"

"It is too much, but even if two hundred were needed you would give it freely, I know, if it would save that poor man. Oh, the poor Indians; poor race! If we could only free all of them as we hope to save Isidro!"

As she spoke there was a knock at the door and Manuel entered with a roll of papers in his hand. Turning to Don Fernando, he said: "I come with my mind somewhat disturbed, Señor Marin. I fear that all our work has been in vain. I find that all the documents are in the hands of Estéfano Benites and he has disappeared. His wife assured me that he had gone to Saucedo and would not return for some time."

"What a bother, Manuel!"

"Perhaps he has hidden himself. That

fellow has the face of Pilate!" observed Lucia.

"I do not think that, Señora," said Manuel.

"The worst of it is that I cannot postpone the day of my departure if I wish to reach the train I desire to take."

"You go to-morrow?"

"To-morrow, friend; everything is ready, and to remain longer would mean delaying my journey for fifteen days. We have five days on horse-back and the train only comes once in fifteen days to the Andes Station, the last on the line. But you remain, Manuel?"

"Yes, Señor Marin, I will remain and use every possible effort to accomplish our purpose."

"Perhaps by your plan, Fernando, everything can be arranged," said Lucia.

"We will see; I have thought, Manuel, to invite all the neighbours to a farewell breakfast to-morrow morning, and there speak to all in favour of Isidro, entreat them, try to obtain from them a promise to work for him."

"A very happy idea, and I think it will give good results."

"Another idea occurs to me, dear Fernando; send an invitation to Pilate, and if he is here he will surely come."

"You have re-baptized the man, Lucia," said her husband laughing.

"Not a bad idea," added Manuel, "because on his return he will see that he was included in the invitations, and perhaps he will lend us his services."

"Very well. I will write the invitation and send it at once."

"And I will go and inspect the 'camp of the kitchen.'" Excusing herself, Lucia left the room.

"Well, Don Fernando; that idea of Doña Lucia is a very happy one. Do you know that the invitation to Benites—or Pilate, as your wife so wittily calls him—is very important."

"Ah, my friend! the women always excel us in insight and imagination. Lucia has ideas sometimes that perfectly enchant me. I assure you that each day I feel more in love with my wife. Manuel, I hope that when you marry you will be as happy as I am."

Manuel's face rivalled the tints of the glowing sunset sky as he rose to take leave.

CHAPTER XXIII

In the yard of the "White House" might be seen more than twenty horses saddled; for the neighbours, on receiving the invitation of Don Fernando, wished to render him the customary honours by accompanying him a league on his journey.

Twelve mules were being loaded with the baggage which the family wished to take with them, the first part of the journey having to be made on horseback.

The guests were arriving, Manuel and his family being among the first.

The table in the spacious dining-room was artistically adorned; the abundance of fruit, as well as a great variety of savoury dishes prepared by the skilful cooks, were as inviting to the eye as to the appetite. The reception-room was full of people exchanging the customary salutations.

Meanwhile the orphans, Margarita and Rosalia, had gone to the cemetery to pay a visit, which would be the last, to the graves of their parents.

The "holy ground" of Killac was a rough

uncared for place with here and there a rough wooden cross. But Señor Marin, solicitous, even for the grave of Juan and Marcela, had caused to be erected a cross of pure white stone to mark their resting-place. When Margarita was called on to part with her mother she seemed like a nightingale without wings to aid her in seeking either food or nest. To-day she came to her parents' grave with her heart filled with the love of loves.

"Mother, father! Good-bye!" murmured Margarita, after reciting "Our Father," and "Hail Mary," as Lucia had taught her.

Just as the company were about to pass into the dining-room Estéfano Benites presented himself. On seeing him, Lucia, Don Fernando and Manuel exchanged significant glances and Lucia gave a smile of triumph.

After saluting Lucia, Estéfano turned to Don Fernando saying: "I only returned this morning from a little visit to Saucedo, and, finding your letter, have come right along on the same horse, for I wished to accompany you."

"Many thanks, Don Estéfano, that is what I expected of your amiability," replied Don Fernando.

"Doña Petronila, kindly take the head of the table," said Don Fernando.

"What an idea! By no means, when the priest is here!" replied that lady.

"Yes, the priest is the one who should preside over us," was the opinion of several.

"Very well, please yourselves. I thought of Doña Petronila on account of the ladies."

"Yes, Don Fernando, you are right. The lady should sit here. I will take the other side," and the priest selected a comfortable place quite to his liking.

When all were served, Don Fernando rose to his feet, saying: "Ladies and gentlemen. I did not wish to go away from this generous town, which has given me its hospitality, without saying farewell to its good and noble people, and have given myself the pleasure of gathering them together here at this modest breakfast. I drink to the health and prosperity of the inhabitants of Killac."

"Bravo! Bravo!" was repeated in chorus.

When the repast was nearly finished, and every one was in an excellent humour, Don Fernando, who had measured and calculated everything beforehand, rose again:

"Gentlemen. I request your attention once more. I beg my friends to give me a proof of their affection. I wish to go away from Killac, carrying only pleasant impressions, without leaving any misfortunes behind me. I believe there is a prisoner in the jail—the unfortunate sexton—and I hope that all will work for his liberation."

A great clapping of hands followed. When order was again restored, Don Sebastian said: "Let the priest speak; really, it belongs to him to answer."

"The Justice is here; let him speak," replied

the priest, to which Don Hilarión responded: "For my part, I should like to have all the prisoners set free; they give me more trouble than my wife does!"

After the laughter which followed this observation had subsided, Manuel asked: "Then you give him his liberty?"

"As far as I am concerned, why not?" replied the Justice.

"Then let us drink to the freedom of my sexton," replied the priest.

"Yes, gentlemen, with full glasses," said Don Fernando, then, turning to Lucia he added: "It is time to go."

"To your healths, gentlemen!"

"A pleasant journey, Señor Marin."

Manuel and his mother had decided upon making a visit to Lima. He would go first to arrange some business matters. He expected to make the latter part of his journey in company with the family of Señor Marin.

The farewells had been said; Lucia in her elegant riding habit was in the act of mounting, when she let fall her beautiful ivory handled riding whip. Don Sebastian, who stood near, made haste to pick it up and hand it to her.

At that moment there appeared at the street entrance a troop of armed men under the command of Lieutenant Lopez, who, turning to Don Sebastian, as the troops surrounded the house, said: "By orders of the Authority give yourself up prisoner, sir!"

If a thunderbolt had fallen in their midst, it

would not have produced the effect that was caused by the words of Lieutenant Lopez who, taking a paper from his pocket, unfolded and read it, saying: "Estéfano Benites, Pedro Escobedo, and Hilarion Verdejo will also give themselves up as prisoners!"

"Treason! Don Fernando has spread a net for us!" angrily shouted Benites.

"And, really, why do they imprison me? I should like to know," asked Don Sebastian.

Meanwhile the panic increased among those present, who could not understand the reason for these arrests; they did not remember the assault of the fifth of August, and forgot the right which belongs to a new authority to commence his period of government with acts of justice.

Don Fernando, without taking notice of Benites, called to Lieutenant Lopez: "Sir Officer! May I know by whose order you make these arrests?"

"Certainly!" holding out to Don Fernando the sheet which he still held in his hand. It proved to be a judicial offer given at the request of the political authority to seize the persons referred to.

Don Fernando turned to Manuel, who had approached full of anxiety. "Keep yourself calm. The worst bandage for the eyes of reason is heat; proceed with coolness. Go and speak with Guzmán; I shall write to him by the first post."

Turning to the people, Señor Marin said

aloud: "I entreat you not to be so much alarmed. This will all be smoothed out in a few days. I answer for it."

"Take your horses; it is time to march," ordered Don Fernando and two groups started from the house, for very different destinations; one for the prison and the other for the highway.

CHAPTER XXIV

The scene of an arrest, in a small town, is like a conflagration in a large one.

When the soldiers left the house, taking with them their four prisoners, every doorway was filled with curious people,—the small boys marching along behind the troops, and from every side were heard such remarks as these :

" Jesus, Mary and Joseph ! "

" Jesus protect us ! Is it true ? "

" What do these eyes that are returning to dust behold ? "

They say that it is an act of treachery on the part of Don Fernando ; that he had invited them to his house in order to have them arrested ! "

" No ! They say that he will be security for them." So the comments ran.

" Take courage, mother, do not fear ; have confidence in God," said Manuel to his mother. Giving her his arm he conducted her home by the more retired streets.

When they arrived, she said : " Leave me, Manuel ; go and do your duty."

Manuel, who had some general knowledge of

law, set himself to work to see what could be done for Don Sebastian.

Doña Petronila wept and prayed, lifting up to heaven her petitions for her husband and son. She seemed resigned to any kind of calamity with that resignation which carries one above all misfortune to the height of heroism. "Have faith and hope," she said to herself, waiting for a day of calm after the horrible hours of tempest.

CHAPTER XXV

The travellers pursued their own way, leaving behind them the troubles of Killac.

At a quick pace they crossed the seemingly interminable "pampas," where numerous herds of cattle were grazing, climbed the hills shaded by large trees and crept upward around sharp rocks and on the brink of yawning chasms. During the five days' journey from Killac to the station the traveller goes crushing under his feet the wild flowers whose fragrance fills the air he breathes; then he reaches the lofty "Cordillera de los Andes," where the snow, melted by the warm rays of the sun, comes down the mountain sides in crystalline currents to the plains beneath where the long grass repeats the murmuring sound of the winds that sway it to and fro.

"Fernando, what do you think of these events which have taken place recently?" asked Lucia in one of their intervals of rest.

"My dear, I am filled with wonder when I contemplate these coincidences."

"God has not wished us to leave Killac with-

out witnessing the punishment of the culprits," retorted Lucia.

"So it seems. We should never doubt a just Providence, whose action may delay, but always arrives at last."

"Fernando, with reason it is said that for truth we should trust time, and for justice . . . God."

"Do you think that Champi will be let out?"

"I think so. There is no doubt whatever about his innocence."

"I knew very well that when the Peruvian Indian does anything wrong it is because he is forced to it by oppression and made desperate by abuse," replied Lucia.

"You are right, my dear. Now we must hasten on or we shall not reach our camping-place before night."

As the fifth day was wearing away the travellers suddenly espied before them what seemed to be two shining steel serpents stretching along the plains and above them a cloud of vapour, like the strong breath of a giant, while the sharp whistle of a locomotive reached their ears. "The railroad!" was the simultaneous cry of all. In ten minutes more all were dismounting at the station.

After conducting the ladies to the waiting room Don Fernando went to arrange for the return of their horses and prepare their baggage for the train.

"Gabino! Bring me that green valise," said Lucia to the servant who accompanied them.

"Señora, shall we change our dresses?" asked Margarita.

"Certainly, my dear; we will not need our riding habits any more. Put on your gray dress with blue ribbons. That suits you well and is suitable for travelling."

"Yes, señora, and what will you wear?"

"My black one. For a señora there is nothing more elegant than black."

At this moment the train drew up to the platform. On seeing it Gabino crossed himself devoutly exclaiming. "Most holy Trinity! There goes the devil! Who else could move that?"

Their preparations were soon completed, and all were seated in the train where the ladies of the party were going to take their first railway journey.

CHAPTER XXVI

In the meantime, Manuel went about his duties sad and silent. One day he came home and said to Doña Petronila: "I have succeeded in getting them to take surety for Don Sebastian."

"Has the Judge decreed it?"

"Yes. Everything is arranged and at twelve we will have him at home."

"Blessed are you, child of my heart! And the others?"

"I know nothing about the others. I have tried to do something for Isidro, who will come out soon."

Doña Petronila, who had watched her son closely during these days, drew him nearer to her saying: "Apart from all these things, Manuel, there is something that makes you suffer. There is some worm gnawing at your heart that will take you to your death!" and great tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Mother, mother mine! Why do you weep?"

"Why art thou silent. My heart is the heart of a mother. Remember, Manuel, my life is thine!"

Manuel could not resist any longer. He was as weak as a woman. He had suffered so much! He threw himself into his mother's arms and hid his tears on her shoulder, just as in former years he had soothed his childish griefs, in the same manner. "Mother, mother of my soul! Blessed may you be! I feel sad unto death!" replied the youth who, timid in scenes of home and heart, could show himself a hero in the hour of combat.

"Manuel, my son, I know; I have guessed what worm gnaws at your heart—you love Margarita, and weep because you are separated, and you fear you will never see her again."

"Blessed mother, forgive me if my heart is not still entirely yours; but the one whose name you have pronounced is the angel of my happiness—I love her, yes, and perhaps. . ."

"Why do you despair, Manuel? Why can you not marry her? Why may I not have two children instead of one?"

"Mother mine, you are my Providence, but remember that Margarita will see in me the son of the man who caused the death of her parents; she will refuse my hand and cast me out of her heart."

"What nonsense! Refuse you!" replied Doña Patronila raising her hands and remaining silent for some moments. Then, like one coming out of the excitement of a battle, added: "That can be overcome easily; speak with Don Fernando and . . . reveal the name of your real father."

"Mother mine!"

"Yes, and what fault have you? It was a misfortune, and why should I not endure the shame for the sake of the happiness of my dear son, for your happiness?"

At that moment, Doña Petronila made the last sacrifice of a loving mother and of a deceived woman.

"Go," continued Doña Petronila; "overtake them on their journey; you have enough to do it with. Arrange your marriage and return happy and contented. Then you will be able to attend to your business here."

Manuel kissed many times the brow of his mother, down whose cheeks rolled great tears, like the holy water that should bless the union of Manuel and Margarita.

Doña Petronila broke the silence by saying: "Enough, my dear Manuel!"

The young man lifted his head with manly pride as he replied: "To-day I swear to you my adored mother, to sacrifice, if need be, the last breath of my life to make sure your happiness and that of my Margarita. I will go now and finish all pending matters and to-morrow at break of day will take the road and endeavour to overtake Don Fernando and ask him for the hand of his god-child."

So saying he went out leaving his mother absorbed in meditation.

At length, falling on her knees and covering her face with her hands, she sobbed: "Oh, merciful Virgin! I pray to thee for him who is

so good and ask pardon for myself. Manuel! I! Are we culpable! Was it not the power of black fate, black as the night without morn, that conducted me to the forbidden arms of a faithless man?" Her heart shed blood,—blood of her soul, remembering the scenes of twenty years before.

A little before twelve o'clock Manuel came home again, saying to his mother: "Everything is going on well. Don Sebastian is already free. The Alcalde has just passed the order, and I will go myself to conduct Don Sebastian home."

"And what conditions did the Judge impose?"

"Only that he should keep straight in all things and consider the town as his prison."

"Then we cannot go away from here?"

"You and Don Sebastian cannot, but I will go to-morrow morning, arrange with Don Fernando, and then return to your side."

At this moment Don Sebastian entered.

"You have beaten me," said Manuel.

"Really, I expected that you would have come to bring me."

"You have come too quickly for that, Don Sebastian; I came to give my mother notice that she might not be surprised by your sudden appearance. I intended to go for you immediately."

"Very well; I am here. And now Petronila what have you for me to drink? Really I am very thirsty."

"I will make you something at once. There is good wine in the house."

"Now that you are at home, Don Sebastian, I will ask your blessing and permission."

"I do not understand, really."

"You are my second father. I intend to ask for the hand of Margarita. That will cut off these discords at the root," said Manuel with studied meaning.

"I do not disapprove of your intention, Manuel; the girl is a pearl, but she is still a child."

"I do not think of marriage just now. I wish to ask for her, then continue my studies and be received as a lawyer."

"That is another story, my son; really, you give me pleasure. When do you start?"

"To-morrow morning early."

"Very good. Take everything you need and return soon."

CHAPTER XXVII

Isidro Champi, accompanied by his faithful Martina, arrived at his house that day, pale and sad.

As he came in, his children came running to him as a flock of partridges to their mother. The heart of the sexton, which was dark as the cave of a witch, received light and warmth from the kisses of his children as he caressed them in silence. Martina entered the cabin slowly and knelt down in the middle of the room lifting her clasped hands to heaven. "Allpa mama!" she exclaimed, smothering in her breast all the burdens of her wounded soul which she could not reveal, shedding bitter tears. "Still crying Martina? Has the rain of your heart not yet ceased" asked Isidro noticing his wife.

"Alas, my husband!" replied Martina rising, —pain swims in tears as the gull plunges into the waters of the lake, and, like her, wets her feathers but refreshes her breast, alas!"

Isidro seemed consoled by the presence of his children; but on looking them over, calling them by their names, thoughts of his lost

heifers came to his mind and he murmured sighing: "The chestnut, the black!"

"Ah, Isidro, in the stormy night when the lightning flashes and the thunder peals among the rocks, man shelters himself in his cabin and the foxes and the pumas leave their dens to rob and slay the lambs. For us has raged the fierce tempest," said Martina, seating herself on the rough bed by the side of the youngest child.

"For the puma and fox we have the trap of the yellow stone; but from our oppressors there is no way of freeing ourselves. Patience! patience! Isidro death is sweet to the sad," added the wife.

"The brave must be tranquil as the moon-lit night in which the shepherd's song makes sweet music! Ah! If we did not have these chicks how sweet it would be to die!" said Isidro pointing to the children who were shouting and leaping around the eldest boy.

Martina replied: "We were born slaves of the priests, slaves of the governor, slaves of the 'cacique'; slaves of everyone who holds the rod of authority."

Isidro doubled his 'poncho' and put it under his head for a pillow saying: "Indians! Yes. Death is our sweet hope of liberty."

Martina came to his side wishing to turn his thoughts from his dark sorrow said, passing her hand through his hair: "Will you go up to the tower again?"

"Perhaps," replied the Indian "to-morrow I shall have to ring those cursed bells which from to-day I hate."

CHAPTER XXVIII

The railway journey was full of interest to the two girls, and not long enough to be wearisome.

Presently the white towers of the city came in sight.

"What a beautiful sight! What a lovely country!" said Lucia. "It looks like a white dove in its nest among the willows. What are the people like, Fernando?"

"The beauty of the city can only be compared to the kindness of its daughters. You will enjoy our stay greatly," replied her husband.

The train drew up to the station and Don Fernando and family went to the Grand Imperial Hotel where they were to await the arrival of Manuel.

Eight days were sufficient for the travellers to become acquainted with the populous city, observing everything and searching out its tendencies and customs. Streets wide and straight but badly paved; Moorish temples, browned and stained by the passing years; women, beautiful as a golden legend; robust

countrywomen with all the candour of their souls depicted in their countenances; theatres, business houses of all classes and grades, nothing escaped their minute observation, aided and facilitated by the knowledge and explanations of Don Fernando.

CHAPTER XXIX

One day Lucia said to her husband: "I declare to you, Fernando, this would be a celestial mansion were it not for the moral inconveniences I have noted in my simple experience."

"I know them, my dear; I knew them beforehand, the reluctance of the soul to remain long in one place, the anxiety to arrive in Lima the centre of light that captures all the butterflies of Perú."

"I like your logic, Fernando, but you have failed to find the key," replied Lucia.

"Well, tell me then, what has most attracted your attention here."

"There are two things that I have noticed particularly."

"I know one of them is the number of friars of all colours, that go about the streets," interrupted her husband.

Lucia became grave, her spirit seemed to be considering something far away. Breathing a sigh which seemed to come from the depths of her heart, she said: "What has most attracted my attention is the surprising number of orphans

in the orphan asylum here. Ah, my Fernando! I know that the countrywoman does not cast away in that manner the pieces of her heart. She has no need to throw them away, because in her case those social considerations which put on the mask of feigned virtue do not come between the mother and her child that came by chance or by crime! Fernando, may God pardon my wrong thoughts, remembering without wishing to do so, the secret of Marcela."

Don Fernando listened with attention and surprise. He was overpowered by the brightness of a great soul of whose superiority he was, perhaps, ignorant until that moment. Silence reigned for a moment, then he sighed with perhaps as deep pain as Lucia's, saying: "Poverty, also, sometimes opens the doors of the Asylum." Then approaching her he impressed a kiss upon the brow of his wife.

CHAPTER XXX

Manuel had a pleasant journey in every respect, arriving safely at the city which held in its keeping his heart's desire. Waiting only to shake off the dust of travel, and array himself in suitable attire, Manuel turned his face towards the Imperial Hotel.

Margarita, standing by a little table on which was a Chinese vase filled with jasmines and daffodils, filling the room with their fragrance, heard his step in the corridor and whispered to herself: "It is he!"

The door of the blue room opened and Manuel appeared on the threshold.

"Señora! Señor!" he said extending his hand to each in turn, who returned his salutations cordially.

"Margarita!"

"Manuel! You have come!" were the words that passed between the young people, but the eyes translated other words from the heart.

"Sit down and tell me all the news from Killac. How about Don Sebastian and Isidro Champi?" inquired Don Fernando.

"Don Sebastian has come out without much trouble, but as for Isidro, I need a document from you to ensure his not being troubled afterwards."

"I will prepare it immediately. I shall not return to Killac and do not wish the poor Indian to run the risk of being persecuted again on the same pretext. Do you return to Killac, Manuel?"

"Immediately, to ensure the safety of Don Sebastian and Isidro, as well as to arrange everything for my journey to Lima."

After a little more conversation, Don Fernando excused himself to attend to some pressing business.

"I have some very important business about which I wish to consult you; when will you be at liberty to attend to me?" asked Manuel.

"To-night, my friend, after eight o'clock I shall be at your service."

"Come and take chocolate with us," invited Lucia.

"Thanks, Señora, I shall not fail to come."

As Manuel passed down the street he saw in the window of a jeweller's shop a beautiful agate cross set in gold. "How beautiful it would be for Margarita," thought he. Entering the shop he quickly bought the jewel and transferred it to his pocket.

CHAPTER XXXI

At the hour appointed, Manuel ascended the steps of the Hotel. Margarita was seated by the table playing with the flowers when Manuel appeared at the door.

"Margarita, soul of my soul, I have come for you," he said taking her hand and seating himself at her side.

"But you are going away."

"I have come to ask you of Don Fernando for my wife."

"And Doña Lucia?"

"Of both of them. Will you be mine Margarita?"

"And if they are not willing?"

"But you love me, do you not, Margarita?" insisted the young man.

"Yes," timidly replied the daughter of Marcela.

Manuel took the little cross from his pocket and, giving it to her, said: "Margarita, I swear to you on this cross to be always faithful to you. Keep it for my sake."

Margarita took the cross silently and hid it in her dress.

At that moment Lucia and her husband entered the room.

"Something serious has happened to you, Manuel," said Don Fernando looking at the young man.

"Señor Marin, it is the most serious thing that I expect to meet in my life. I love Margarita and have come to ask you for her hand within three years."

"Manuel, I should be greatly pleased, but . . . Don Sebastian?"

"Señor, I know your argument, and it is necessary that I should begin to destroy it. I am not the son of Don Sebastian Pancorbo. A misfortune, the abuse of a man on the weakness of my mother gave me my being. I am linked to Don Sebastian by gratitude, because, on marrying my mother, he gave her the honour, and to me . . . he lent his name."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Margarita, unable to keep silent.

"My dear child," murmured Lucia.

"Your nobleness obliges us to make use of the right that Marcela, before her death, gave to us when she confided her secret to Lucia," replied Don Fernando gravely.

"I am glad, Don Fernando, the child is not responsible in these cases, and we must always throw the blame upon the laws of man and never upon God."

"That is so," assented Don Fernando.

Manuel lowered his voice, and with a look of

shame, said: "Don Fernando, my father was Don Pedro Miranda y Claro, former priest of Killac!"

Don Fernando and Doña Lucia both turned pale as if both were struck by the same electric current.

Surprise held them silent for a moment.

"My God!" exclaimed Lucia at length, clasping her hands.

There passed through the mind of Don Fernando like a flash the name and life of the priest Pascual, and he said to himself, "Will the wrong-doing of the father cut off the happiness of two angels?" And, as if doubting the truth of what he heard, asked again: "Whom did you say?"

Manuel replied quickly: "The Bishop Claro, Señor."

Don Fernando approached Manuel and embracing him answered: "You yourself have said it, Manuel. We cannot blame God, but we must blame the inhuman laws of man that take the father from the child, the nest from the bird, the stalk from the flower!"

"Manuel, Margarita! Birds without a nest!" interrupted Lucia, white as the almond flower, unable to contain herself, the large tears rolling down her cheeks.

Manuel could not explain to himself the meaning of that scene, while Margarita was mute, trembling like a lily stricken down by the tempest.

The word of Don Fernando must come to

put an end to that sad situation—but his manly voice—always firm and frank—trembled like that of a boy.

At last, indicating Margarita, as if recommending her to the care of his wife, he turned to Manuel saying:

"There are things in this life which overwhelm us—have faith and courage young man, unfortunate Manuel. Marcela, on the borders of the grave confided to Lucia the secret of the birth of Margarita who is not the daughter of Juan Yupanqui, the Indian, but of the Bishop Claro!"

"My sister!" "My brother!" exclaimed Manuel and Margarita, the latter falling into the arms of Lucia, whose tears accompanied the the sorrow of those tender

BIRDS WITHOUT A NEST.

THE END

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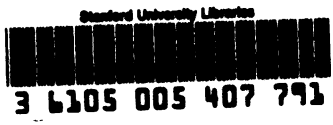

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